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## SPIRIT AND SOCIETY

*By the Same Author*



THE LEARNED KNIFE

THE PROSPECTS OF HUMANISM

ISIS AND OSIRIS

THE NAMELESS FAITH

# SPIRIT AND SOCIETY

*by*

LAWRENCE HYDE



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## Chapter One

# THE DECLINE OF THE WEST

### 1. INTRODUCTION

My aim in the present essay is to advance the view that the only hope for the creation of a new society out of the terrible chaos in which we are at present living lies in a renaissance of religion. What I have written is addressed primarily to two types of readers. In the first place I venture to suggest to those who have already accepted the religious view of life certain possibilities in the way of applying spiritual ideas and realisations in the field of social reform. In this respect the situation is straightforward enough; it is a question only of discussing the outworking in the sociological realm of principles respecting which we are broadly in agreement.

But I have in view also the type of person who, although he has reached the point of becoming uneasy regarding the adequacy of a purely humanistic philosophy of life, has not yet taken the momentous step of accepting the values of religion. And here I am presented with a somewhat difficult problem. For it is out of the question in these pages to undertake an analysis of the nature of the religious experience.\* The space at my disposal permits me only to call attention to one of its features which is of fundamental importance from the point of view of this particular

\*I have dealt with the more negative aspect of the question—the inadequacy of materialistic and biological interpretations of our human situation—in my *Isis and Osiris*. Its sequel, *The Nameless Faith*, is concerned with the positive problem of laying the foundations for a modern form of religion.

enquiry: the fact that 'religion' is a subject which is on an entirely different level from all others which engage people's attention. For it involves concern with an aspect of being which may truly be said to have a unique place in our experience: with that which is not a mode of life, but its metaphysical ground and foundation. Our transactions with the Divine are not of the same order as our transactions with any object *within* the universe, however exalted its nature; for they relate us to That by which the universe is permeated and sustained. And from this it follows inescapably that religious knowledge, in any serious sense of the term, can be obtained only as a result of a transformation of consciousness of a profound order, in the course of which our familiar conceptions and values must be painfully abandoned or re-oriented so that life may present itself to us from an altogether new angle. In religious language, true understanding in this field comes only of 'regeneration'.

With respect to the present volume this situation obviously raises the difficulty that throughout these pages I cannot avoid constant reference to convictions, realisations and experiences which must be largely unintelligible to the non-religious reader, and which can be described only in terms which will almost certainly appear to him as being suspect or obscure. Yet as I see the matter I have no alternative but to follow this course, in the hope that a few sympathetic readers at least may gain some understanding of what I am trying to convey. Admittedly, it is incumbent upon every writer or speaker to take all the pains he can to make his meaning clear to those whom he is addressing. In these modern days especially there is absolutely no excuse for wilful reticence, avoidable obscurity or forbidding mystification. Yet at the same time there are evidently limits to the demands which can be legitimately made upon a religious thinker by the scientific and sceptically-minded. Those people who work out their problems in terms of

'operational concepts', 'protocols' and semantics may be fully justified in demanding that statements shall have a definite and assignable meaning. But they tend to forget that there are regions of experience which are intelligible only *from the inside*. Such terms as 'the Void', 'the Jewel within the Lotus', 'the Pleroma', 'the Celestial Marriage', 'the Tao', 'the Dark Night of the Soul', 'Limitless Light' have, one must insist, valid and verifiable 'referents' for those who have passed through the kind of experiences which render them comprehensible.

Because the statements of poets, mystics, prophets and religious seers appear as 'nonsense' to the empiricist, or 'foolishness' to the 'natural man', it does not follow that they have not a valuable and comprehensible message to the initiated. And anyone who takes his stand upon religion, however much he may desire to communicate with his 'secular' readers, can scarcely avoid using terms which convey very little to them. He can only point out that expressions which appear at the outset to be devoid of any real content will in course of time disclose important meanings to those who address themselves seriously to the religious quest.

A further point is that religion is an emotional experience, and this means that most writers on the subject are naturally impelled to use poetic or mystical language in referring to the more exalted objects of their thought. This may be somewhat tiresome for the detached intellectual enquirer, but he can scarcely demand that the situation should be translated to a level which suits *his* convenience alone. He must be prepared to accept the conditions attaching to an attempt to convey to him the character of the realisations to which the author has attained in this sphere, and give him as patient and fair a hearing as possible.

In any case it may well be that the 'realistic' thinker

will finally have to accept the existence of this division, amounting almost to a chasm, between 'mystical' and 'secular' knowledge as something which is 'given'. To anticipate a point which I shall have occasion to put forward on a later page, there would appear to be no inherent reason why the universe should not be so patterned that its more external aspects—those, I mean, which are commanded by the discursive mind—are subordinate to others which are practically inaccessible except to the few who have opened their souls to spiritual realities. Why should it not be the case that men are called upon to pay an enormous price for what may be described as 'basic understanding'? May not the essential vision of which we are most desperately in need be just that which is vouchsafed only to those who have undertaken a type of discipline on which the world sets practically no value?

If there is anything in this view—and it is of course that which has always been embraced by religious believers—then the complaint of the typical educated person today that the mystic is addressing him in insufficiently intelligible terms obviously loses much of its force. The situation derives quite simply from the way in which our experiences would appear to be stratified. How far this view is correct I must, of course, leave the reader to decide for himself. But I hope that I have at least given him some idea of how the situation appears when it is regarded from the mystical end of the spectrum.

Again, it is essential at the very beginning of this essay to emphasize the fact that the contention that religious illumination is more basic and ultimate than any which men accumulate in other fields does not in any sense imply a claim to 'superiority' or 'spiritual fascism'. The plain fact is that in religion we are concerned with experience of an absolutely fundamental order, with man's relation to the supreme Source of his being. But if foundations are

essential, it is no less true also that they are useless to us unless we can effectively build upon them. And this commits us to concern with all that vast range of knowledge which man has to acquire in order to master the forces which are at work in the universe around him. Religion makes essentially for illumination; but unless we are escapists who regard the visible world as *maya* there must be something properly understood and mastered by our minds on which this illumination falls.

Of course since religious vision is to be obtained only by penetrating deeply into the subjective sphere—even, I would affirm, beyond the level touched by 'depth psychology'—the price to be paid for securing it is severe. But this fact is part of the arrangement of things, and not in any sense a cause for pride or self-gratification. And in any case one must remember that if the religious path is properly pursued it should make for a degree of humility which is proportional to the illumination which has been attained. For the first and most salutary lesson which is imparted to the seeker when he enters this realm is that in and for himself he is as nothing.

Finally, due account should be taken of the fact that 'superiority', 'fascism', and the activities of such personalities as Aldous Huxley's Grey Eminence, Father Joseph, are almost always associated with sophistication and high intellectual endowment. But it is one of the basic elements in religion that the knowledge to which it opens the door is accessible to the simple and the humble, and that in this matter the educated have no advantage over them. In fact it is only as a result of a severe process of re-education and a return to primitive innocence that the possessors of 'trained minds' can understand the truths which await them in this field. And from this it follows that, as I shall suggest on a later page, if ever religion again becomes a force in the world it will *not* be the intellectual Neo-

Brahmins amongst us who will make the most serious contribution to such a renaissance; the power and authority will be essentially with those who have become children of Light, whatever the nature of their qualifications in the sphere of culture.

As for the present study, I can say only that it is written by a person who, although he makes no claims to religious illumination, has at least reached the point of recognising the imperative need for men and women today to balance their over-facile knowledge of externals by a deeper acquaintance with that invisible realm of transcendental being which lies behind all manifestation. If we are to be saved from anarchy and destruction we must submit to the obligation of turning for strength and direction to the Within.

## 2. SPIRIT AND SOCIETY

And now at last I am in a position to address myself directly to the theme of this book. Let me begin by attempting to bring out the significance of its title. Man's power of controlling the elements with which he finds himself surrounded depends upon his capacity to associate himself with a creative principle of unfathomable profundity which is symbolized by the term ' Spirit '. In so far as he is attuned to this ultimate Life he finds himself capable of releasing and yet disciplining his emotions, of creating art forms, pursuing scientific investigations, making a proper use of that dangerous weapon, his intellect, achieving a harmonious relation to Nature and his fellow men, and finally of building up an ordered society. In so far as he is not so attuned he finds himself in all these respects involved in chaos, discord and suffering.

There will be no need to stress the fact that the character and activity of Spirit is essentially *interior*. It informs,

vitalizes and elevates every possible type of form, but remains ever within them all as an Agency which can never be known immediately, but only through its manifestations. And the nearer an individual comes to establishing a direct rapport with this potent and liberating principle, the nearer he is to becoming a true creator. The more completely, in fact, does he express the distinctive nature of man.

Speaking in very general terms, one can distinguish five outstanding attitudes towards this problem of transforming life under the inspiration of the Within. First of all we have that of the average unawakened and conventional individual, representative of the vast mass of the population. It may be said that both in personal and social terms he is in a large measure excluded from the sphere of reality as it is understood by the metaphysician and the mystic. He may be lovable and human, and have locked up within him the most splendid potentialities. But he lacks the inspiration, courage or opportunity to pass through the ordeal of finding himself on a deeper level, and as a result he brings into existence, tolerates and perpetuates a form of society which is an expression of his own afflicted and limited being—the society in which we are all called upon to live today, the society which is disintegrating before our eyes because it is cut off from the deeper springs of light and love.

In so far as it has any coherence at all, that coherence derives largely from such forces as gregariousness, mechanistic uniformity, the blind response to standardized conceptions and formulations. Although it expresses the activity of life, it fails to raise that life to the plane of spiritual significance. And as a result it contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction.

Turning to those who have a more positive attitude to the problem, we have first of all the thinkers who are most directly responsible for the 'mental climate' of the age:

the men of science. They have obviously a tremendous function to perform in controlling the more mechanical aspects of our existence. And of course in respect of their more lofty discoveries they are opening up for us high cultural possibilities. But in relation to the task before us of building a new order of society their contribution is, I would urge, subordinate to that of those people who are concerned with awakening man to a spiritual consciousness. Moreover, as I shall argue later, their mode of thinking is in many respects inimical to such an awakening, since it inclines powerfully towards scepticism and materialism.

A deeper philosophy is represented by our modern exponents of Humanism and of the more conventional forms of religion. But they fail to realise and express the spiritual with sufficient intensity to release those energies which are essential if the world is to be saved from the disaster by which it is today threatened. For we do not, I would urge, become concerned with the life of the Spirit in a really fundamental sense until we come to terms with those two complementary figures, the artist and the mystic, which represent the two opposite poles of creative spiritual experience.

The inner life of the soul has a dual aspect. In one direction a man is impelled to affirm his distinctive, individual character, his response to, and action upon, the universe—and it is the artist who is supremely dedicated to this end. In the other he is impelled to affirm his essential and deeply interior unity with all the millions of other souls who collectively make up society—and this is the central inspiration of the mystic and the humanitarian. In this polarity we have a fundamental basis for the modern formula: self-in-community.

As to the artist, the most powerful protests against our devitalized modern existence are made by those men and women who are intensely conscious of the meaning of



individual experience. What they stand for is not the abstract, unappropriated truth of science, but truth which has been personalized and subjectively realised. Their path, if they are genuine, is one that makes the most agonizing demands upon them. There will be no need to indicate its character; every educated person has some idea of the dangers, ecstasies, lacerations, tensions and humiliations which it entails. The essence of the matter is that the price of deeper self-awareness is crucifixion. Anyone who doubts this statement may be invited to study the work and lives of such moderns as Dostoevsky, van Gogh, D. H. Lawrence or Henry Miller.

Such men are inevitably at war with society. They are for the most part 'anti-social'—for the good reason that they have no impulse to cooperate with the purposes of a 'civilization' which is largely based upon the denial of the very insights and inspirations by which they themselves are striving to live. Why should the artist give life and power to a system which consolidates and organizes just those responses and reactions which it is his sacred mission to destroy? So he becomes what superficially appears to be an escapist, in part because he is incapable of measuring up to what a psychologist would describe as 'the demands of normal life', but also because he is concerned with the still *higher* demands which are denied by the machine age in which he has had the misfortune to be born.

I speak, of course, of extreme cases. There are plenty of artists who are willing to cooperate with such creative tendencies as they can discover in our modern culture. But it is those alone who have achieved true intensity of being who bring out the essential tragedy of our situation.

Finally, we have the individual who is attuned to the opposite pole of spiritual experience—the mystic who is responsive to the great complementary principle that we are all in essence one. Unless you are perverse you cannot

penetrate to the deeper levels of your psychology without finding there something which is organically one with every other human being. This is a basic mystical truth, and it explains why even that extreme individualist, the artist, is possessed by such a deep and passionate urge to communicate his experience. Because, quite simply, what is known and realised at that depth belongs to all.

What in the typical artist is a subordinate realisation becomes in the mystic paramount. He lives only for unity. He also, of course, is committed to a profound transformation of the personality. But he is concerned before everything, not to emphasize his distinctiveness, but to purge himself of everything which prevents him from coming into at-one-ment with the Great Spirit and his fellow men. And just as most artists are, so to speak, under-communized, so are most mystics under-individualized. That 'self' which they so passionately dedicate to God and humanity is insufficiently distinct, responsible, aware. Although the Light is truly received, it is not brought to a proper point of focus. And this means, in effect, that they uncritically accept a great many elements in life which the artist is concerned to repudiate. They are often only essentially spiritualized—transformed at the core but not in relation to externals. Apart from their central insights, their values can be conventional and commonplace. But they are all the same dealing with life on the profoundest level of all.

There are great souls who are both personalized and universalized, but they are too exceptional to come in any serious sense into our unhappy modern story. Yet they at least provide us with the ideal to which we should aspire.

### 3. LIFE AND FORM

I have already suggested above that the essence of the Spirit is that it is active within all forms and subordinates them to its indwelling life. It is important to realize that in our modern society we are concerned for the most part merely with its *minimal* activity. Thus one finds in treatises on politics such statements as that in a democratic regime "the spiritual element of personality must be respected". But this amounts to no more than saying, in the tradition of Liberalism, that certain absolutely human rights are being vindicated, such as that of choice of labour, freedom of speech and assembly, or the claim to possess private property. It is obvious that privileges of this order can be fully enjoyed while culture remains on a relatively low spiritual level. The most which such freedoms provide is a framework within which life can develop in a wide variety of ways. All that is positively guaranteed is the exclusion of barbarism.

We do not become concerned with the Spirit in any serious sense until we touch an order of power and inspiration which may really be said to *transform* life. This means in one direction the stimulation of certain sympathies which, when followed, work towards breaking down all the different allegiances and attachments by which the conventional are conditioned. And in another it means thinking in far more flexible and imaginative terms than does the typical person who has enjoyed the benefits of an 'intellectual training'.

As an instance, I find a distinguished modern sociologist propounding the following query: 'Can Sociology, the most secularized approach to the problem of human life, co-operate with theological thinking?' Is it unfair to suggest that in attempting to relate two such highly intellectualized disciplines to one another he is automatically excluding himself from the inner and creative realm of the spiritual?

The elaborate and scrupulous coordinations which result may have a certain function in clarifying our experience in this realm, but the terms in which the undertaking is attempted preclude the possibility of anything very important being achieved. The enterprise is killed at the start before the weary dialectic has begun to unfold.

When, on the contrary, the mind comes more deeply under the influence of the Spirit its processes may be said to be *internalized*. By this I mean that energy is diverted from analysing and defining external situations to perfecting states of mind which will ensure a proper response to them. That is to say, the spiritual individual is less concerned to establish scientific control over the facts disclosed by research and more to perfect himself in that science of being which will render him sensitive to every situation which may arise and capable of dealing with it in inspirational and creative terms. To this important question I shall return in the next chapter.

It is important to observe that education and spiritual training do not cover altogether the same ground. The aim of the first, although it implies a certain concern with high ideals, is to enable the individual to deal properly with the field of his ordinary experience. The aim of the second, on the contrary, is to increase his receptivity to mystical and illuminating influences. It implies work on the deeper levels of the organism itself rather than on the faculties which it employs. And it involves essentially turning *away* from the world of action in order to return to it with increased power and vision.

In my own view it is this deeper discipline alone which will provide the key to our modern difficulties. This means that I here advance the claims of a high-tensioned as opposed to a low-tensioned consciousness, and that I emphasize the significance of the more feminine, religious, inspirational and intuitive elements in our psychology—

because they are more of the Spirit. And I stress them, not because I fail to recognize that there are also important contributions to be made on the more sober, systematic and objective plane—I shall have something to say in a later chapter regarding what I term 'levels of reform'—but because they have been fatally neglected in our contemporary rationalistic, over-masculinized, scientific culture.

In other words I take my stand on a distinctively religious conception of the problem of creating a new social order. I believe that we shall be lost unless a minority at least unfold a genuinely spiritual consciousness, and by their example inspire and fortify the rest. The world will be saved only by those who have developed sympathies of a more subtle order, and who as a result are possessed of a superior type of knowledge. It is a question of the little leaven which leaveneth the whole lump.

I therefore make no attempt in these pages to contribute to the mass of ideas, theories and proposals which are being advanced in this field on the humanistic plane. They have their function to perform. But the key to the whole situation as I see it is not the relatively easy manipulation of facts and principles by the scientifically-minded, but the intensification of consciousness at a considerable cost in order that true life and power may be released. We should make a more effective use of our energies by directing them into more fruitful channels. Our fundamental problem is not that of creating a new society, but of creating the new men who alone can bring that society into existence.

My object in the present study is to consider some of the more important results of approaching the task of social reconstruction from this more subjective angle. And this means emphasis upon elements in the situation which are disastrously neglected in this age of planning, and which, apart from that, are of considerable interest in themselves.

The ideas embodied in this preliminary statement will

be worked out in detail as we proceed. I begin with some observations on the present state of our civilization.

#### 4. WORLD CRISIS

The development of our western culture presents us at the moment with a remarkable spectacle. On the one hand enormous energy and enthusiasm are being displayed by a powerful group of reformers in designing and putting into operation plans for a new type of social order, based upon what can best be described as the principles of scientific humanism. These pioneers place their trust essentially in a combination of intelligence and determination, and they assume that the morality of their actions will be sufficiently guaranteed by that goodness which has been implanted by nature in the souls of human beings. They have much faith and courage, and they are naturally impressed, to the point almost of being positively dazed, by the boundless possibilities which modern science is opening up before us.

Yet just as the tendency which they represent is reaching its peak we are met with a steadily increasing interest on the part of a minority in the inner life of the Spirit. For such people perceive clearly enough that the optimism of the laboratory-inspired revolutionaries is far from possessing a substantial foundation. At the very time when we are making such enormous advances in the technical field the level of our civilization is declining in the most disturbing fashion. The fact is being forced upon us that the world is rapidly being ruined by a sinister combination of mechanistic thinking and boundless acquisitiveness. This at every point means the sacrifice of the organic to the abstract, of humanity to commercialism, of nature to science, of the unseen to the seen. In detail this works out in the form of an alternation of booms and slumps, compulsions to imperialistic expansion, the rape of the land,

sensationalistic gratification as a wretched compensation for the soul-destroying routine of the factory and the office, an economic strangle-hold upon democracy, the exaltation of the State, the abstract operations of high finance, the concentration of the population in huge and hideous cities—a general picture which cannot but fill the mind with consternation and despair.

As students of the problem have made clear, the root of the whole evil is moral. For years past we have refused to face certain fundamental spiritual obligations, and we are now confronted with the result. Moreover, the social system which has thus been brought into existence is now beginning to work back upon those who are doomed to live within it. Crime and sexual laxity are increasing to a disconcerting degree, the individual's sense of integrity and personal responsibility is steadily weakening along with his declining devotion to communal ideals and purposes. Not only is there a widespread disinclination to turn the mind to deeper things, but as a result of our extreme preoccupation with the superficial and mechanical aspects of existence the majority of even so-called educated people today are rapidly becoming incapable of thinking on philosophical and spiritual themes.

All these manifestations plainly point to something more than a mere periodical fluctuation in the moral standards of civilized life. Not only is the situation even more serious in many other countries, but the manifold disturbances entailed are occasioned by more radical causes than that of the recent war. A revolution is at work which involves the very foundations of our culture: the capitalistic system, the growth of modern science, and our traditional religion. Further, we have reached a major turning point, not only in our western, but in world history. It cannot be evaded by the East, for war, modern technics and occidental ideology have invaded the Orient on such a scale that there also there

are impending momentous transformations, re-evaluations and revolutions. Even the emergence of Soviet Russia is by itself a sufficient indication that the world pattern is radically changing.

Another radically important element in the present situation lies in the fact that, as far as one knows, for the first time in the history of mankind we are concerned with a crisis which is world-wide. We have reached a point in the development of our economic system and our methods of communication at which all nations and countries are rapidly approaching a condition of interdependence. Whether we like it or not, there is now 'One World'. We are being compelled towards contriving, planning and legislating for humanity as a whole.

This means without doubt the end of a whole phase of human experience. It is no longer a question of 'revolutions of civilization', of cultures emerging, maturing and declining without prejudicing seriously the fate of others with a different geographical location. Now all must rise or fall together. A failure or success at any one point on the globe may have powerful and incalculable repercussions at almost any other. A new discovery in one country can make by implication for prosperity or misery at the other end of the earth. Mechanisms are available for distributing both the good and evil products of man's invention with great speed and accuracy over enormous areas. Isolation no longer means security. Separation and unity are now primarily of the mind and not of matter.

The superficial will attribute this development simply to the automatic outworkings of the discoveries and inventions which we have perfected in the course of the last century. But to the more reflective it cannot but symbolize the fact that the basic mystical truth about the human family—that we are all essentially one in God—is at last being presented to our minds even on the material plane. Hence-



forth we can progress in any real sense only to the degree that we do so as a whole, in the awareness that, as the Chinese say, we are 'one Family under Heaven'. And this fact will inescapably impose upon us all as time goes on both a new mode of physical existence and a new conception of culture. More than that, it will slowly but surely change our consciousness at its roots.

The effect of all these fundamental changes is inevitably a widespread condition of uncertainty. The familiar external landmarks are being irresistibly swept away, and the future presents itself to us as menacing, indeterminate and incalculable. We are driven to seek for permanence in a more interior realm.

### 5. YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED

With all this, there is a positive side to the picture. We are undoubtedly awakening to the seriousness of the crisis with which we are faced. In the first place, thanks to the labours of numbers of careful students of sociological and economic problems, we have been provided with a fairly detailed and exact account of the state of our sick civilization, of the opportunities which have been neglected, the damage which has been done, and the misguided conceptions on which we have been working. Broadly speaking, we now know pretty clearly what *not* to do.

But it is important to realise just how far the contributions of most of these thinkers take us. What we find is that they have a very much clearer vision of the evil system in which we are living than of that by which it needs to be replaced. They have a notable capacity for the clear analysis of the confusions and errors in which we have become involved in the past. They know precisely, and are capable of cogently demonstrating to others, where we have gone wrong. Their autopsies are conducted with exceptional

patience and skill, their diagnoses beyond reproach. But they are reporting from the farthest point which they have reached, and that is the grim frontier which divides the old dispensation from the new. They have little in reserve. Although they have surveyed the past through a microscope, it is through a telescope that they are examining the future. To use an expressive image of Coleridge's, the illumination which they throw upon experience is that cast by the rear lights of a ship upon the waters which it has traversed.

As remarked earlier, it is impossible to study these questions seriously without being driven to the conclusion that the source of all our troubles in the political and economic sphere is moral. As a consequence we find that the problem is being attacked from another angle as well (in many cases, of course, by the same people). Men of deep thought and feeling are arising amongst us and making eloquent appeals for a return to the ethical standards of an earlier generation. For it is sufficiently plain that we have today sunk to such a low level that we are living in this field on the moral capital left us by men and women who took the problem of behaviour far more seriously than we do ourselves.

Emphasis of this type is, of course, unavoidable. We pay for our depraved spiritual condition, not only by being afflicted with corrupt institutions and subject to all manner of vexations and disorders, but, if we are seriously seeking something better, by being obliged to wrestle with deep problems relating to regeneration, redemption and moral re-education. The same radical disorder in our lives which brings us face to face with strikes, venereal disease, food shortages and conurbation brings us also face to face with the principles of morality and ethics in their more forbidding aspect. Symbolically enough, we lay aside Aldous Huxley, the entertaining satirist and address ourselves

instead to the less diverting, but undoubtedly more important Aldous Huxley, the moralist. And this is realistic, for unless we somehow attain command over fundamentals the whole fascinating superstructure which they support will be swept away. Although (for beginners, at least) it is a dull business trying to be good, this is the only condition, we are coming to realise, of pursuing more exciting ends.\*

The persistent and insidious decline in our cultural standards has, of course, been studied by careful observers for many years past. At the end of the first world war such writers as R. H. Tawney and C. E. Montague warned the world pretty plainly in which direction events were moving. In 1933 Beverley Nichols published that disconcerting work, *Cry Havoc*. And now in the midst of a second catastrophe the voices of the discerning few are again being raised for all who have any imagination to hear. In the course of the war Alfred Noyes published a passionate essay entitled *The Edge of the Abyss* which is calculated to make any serious person pause and reflect. Soon after in 1943 Herbert Agar wrote that noble work, *A Time for Greatness*, in which he laid bare the alarming character of our situation with remarkable power. In 1946 Victor Gollancz published his *Our Threatened Values*, while in 1948 Middleton Murry in his penetrating study, *The Free Society*, carried the disturbing story still further.

I have no doubt that several more volumes have been published on this disconcerting theme, but those I have mentioned should be quite sufficient to convince the reflective—if the atom bomb has not done so already—that we are confronted with a major cultural crisis.

\* 'The world-wide attack on civilization is driving us,' says Ralph Barton Perry, 'to choose between a worse evil and a better good than mankind has ever known before. We must be visionary and utopian if we are not to be unprecedentedly base; in order to be realistic we must be loftily idealistic.' Herbert Agar, *A Time for Greatness* (1944 edn.), p. 128.

The effect of these declarations is undeniably powerful. Nevertheless, the impression which most of them leave on one's mind is somehow a little disappointing. And the reason lies, I suggest, in the fact that, however eloquent and justified it may be, all protestation has essentially a negative quality. We cannot escape the feeling that the people who are destined to deal most effectively with this dismal state of affairs are those who are less concerned with admonitions and warnings and more with quiet, unpretentious and positive action. I do not wish to be unfair to these writers, but I cannot get away from the suspicion that there is a certain weakness at the core of their attitude.

In any case there is a psychological element in the situation which we cannot afford to overlook. Even the most serious people can only submit to a strictly limited amount of appeals to their better nature. Too much incrimination and exhortation quickly defeat their object. This is, of course, in one sense a measure of our decadence. But the fact is there, and must be recognized. The only way to avoid reducing even the most conscientious reader to a state of unproductive boredom is to keep such elements as edification, moralizing and philosophical justification within the narrowest limits and to translate the issues as far as possible to the objective plane where they can be dealt with in more analytical and concrete terms.

## 6. THE THRESHOLD OF RELIGION

These appeals to the conscience of society raise also another issue of great importance. All these writers stand for the great fundamental principles on which the stability of the whole social structure depends. And such principles are, in their ultimate reference, religious. But most of them—and in this they are representative of the majority of those amongst us today who are lining up for the defence

of spiritual values—are concerned with religion only in so far as it finds a reflection on the plane of ethical principles and moral standards.

One finds our modern exponents of humanism taking their stand on such documents as the American Constitution and the Bill of Rights, which embody, of course, absolutely fundamental conceptions. But we must not forget that these affirmations originally derived from a consciously held and practised religious faith. Their authors cast into ethical terms convictions and sentiments which had been deepened and maintained by the devout worship of God.

Is there any serious hope for a morality which is thus divorced from its source in a deeper and more mystical experience? The problem is obviously of cardinal importance. What is really demanded of us if we wish to save our disintegrating civilization? May we not have to face the possibility that in order to do so we shall have to become, not merely minimally, but positively and intensely religious? What, in fact, are the Terms of our Contract?

We shall be wise to proceed in this matter with due humility and caution. It is obviously extremely dangerous to lay down terms to the universe in advance. We may finally be compelled to reckon with the fact that the relatively easy path represented by a humanism which avoids practically all concern with other-world implications is inadequate to the task with which we are confronted. The demands made upon us by the Spirit may be far more searching and severe than the philosophically-minded liberal is willing to admit. In order to control effectively that which we find outside ourselves we may have to go inside ourselves in a very complete sense. We may have to think, feel and act in ways which are deeply disturbing to the rationalistic mind. It may not be enough to have God in the background of one's thought as an ultimate Principle, or as a more or less vaguely conceived presupposition of

creative activity. We may, in fact, get nowhere with our problems until we become, in our measure, believers, mystics and seers, until we achieve a living association with the great Unseen. Otherwise we shall lack the finer insights, the deeper responses, the intense and discriminating sympathies which express the real life of the Spirit.

The essence of the matter, I would suggest, is that the inspiration of Humanism is not intense enough to lift us above the realm of matter into that sphere in which we really *experience* the life and power of the Divine. It may stimulate our moral feelings and impel us to righteousness and protestation, but it does not truly release the creative powers within us. It conducts us with great sobriety and dignity into the antechamber, but is impotent to lead us into that inner temple in which we can really become quickened by the Light and the Fire.

As a result we may one day discover that the leadership of humanity has passed into the hands of men and women who have attained to a high order of religious knowledge and power. From which it follows that those people who are consciously opening their souls to the Unseen and sensitizing themselves to spiritual (and not merely psychic) influences from beyond the Veil may be contributing far more directly to the salvation of humanity than even the most enlightened thinkers who are unable to rise above the humanistic plane.

There is a further difficulty to be considered. The intelligent cannot fail to perceive that the deep religious emotions of their forefathers were developed in relation to a theological system which they themselves find it increasingly difficult to accept. This objection is, I believe, perfectly valid; the traditions of orthodoxy can no longer satisfy us. But I am myself convinced that the original inspiration is destined to be recaptured in new and more liberating forms, within which the modern man can work creatively in the

task of building up a new order of society. In fact I believe that, in spite of all the darkness around us, we are on the threshold of a religious renaissance.

I would affirm that, although they may not suspect the fact themselves, the humanists' impassioned defence of 'values' represents only the first phase of a wider movement which will inevitably lead us back to religion. In this matter it is important to see the issues in a proper historical perspective. At the moment it looks very much as if we are concerned with a turning-point in the history of European thought which corresponds to that which was reached in the seventeenth century when men began to awaken to the tremendous possibilities of scientific research. Now, when this way of thinking has become paramount, the pendulum has almost imperceptibly begun to swing back in the opposite direction. A group of thinkers, small in number, but of considerable significance for the future, are turning their minds again to the things of the spirit in the attempt to recapture, in modern terms, certain essential insights and realisations which have been lost in the course of the triumphant extension of our knowledge in the scientific realm. This tendency towards compensation is a fundamental characteristic of the human mind and it is, I would submit, not at all fantastic to suppose that the sequel to three centuries of extreme extraversion will be a renewed concern with those subjective aspects of experience by which objective knowledge so obviously needs to be balanced.

## *Chapter Two*

# RELIGION AND REFORM

### 1. WHAT RELIGION MEANS TODAY

I HAVE made it plain in the preceding chapter that I am taking my stand in this book upon an uncompromisingly religious philosophy. This in the present era is admittedly a somewhat enterprising venture. For on hearing the word 'religion' the modern man justifiably expects the worst. His thoughts turn irresistibly to the impotence of the Churches, the inadequacy of those amongst us who claim to be representatives of the spiritual life, the unedifying disputes of sects and factions, the bondage of so many devout souls to outmoded theological conceptions.

Not, of course, that there is any question of bringing the typical restless, unstable superficial person of today into a living relation with the Mystery. The point is, rather, that the more intelligent of those who are today turning to the Invisible for guidance insist on rejecting any interpretation of the spiritual life which does not conform to certain pretty clearly definable conditions. These conditions, so far from being imposed by the limitations of our present-day consciousness are, I would urge, the expression of true religious insight. They are the result of Light breaking through from within, and the challenge which they present to traditionalism is liberating and creative in character.

In this fact lies the crux of the whole problem. From one point of view the basic truths about life are eternal. From whatever point in history we approach the Mystery we are met with the same immemorial problems, called upon to



make the same sacrifices, subjected to the same disciplines, accorded the same basic revelations. Yet with all this each Epoch has its distinctive note and signature, and this means that there is a form of religion which is alone appropriate to the coming age, and that we cannot hope for an inflow of light through any other channel. Although in one sense truth is eternal, the principle yet holds that there is an order of inspiration appropriate to every age, and if we wish for a true influx of creative power we must attune ourselves to that which is reaching us at this particular stage in our evolution. Just as we are called upon to think in new ways in our relations with the outer world, so also must we learn to think in new ways in our relations with that inner world of Spirit the light of which we so sorely need. It is essentially our modern scriptures which will throw the clearest light upon our modern difficulties.

This fact the traditionalist, however, declines to face. The most serious and tragic element in our contemporary situation is that the majority of thinkers who can claim to some measure of spiritual vision in these disturbed times are conditioned by traditional conceptions which inevitably and disastrously cut them off from those men and women of today who are bewildered and uneasy respecting modern developments and are seeking for a higher order of inspiration and direction. Although they have a clear enough understanding of the objective aspect of the problem their knowledge of its subjective implications is disproportionately small. They have an adequate apprehension of the new forms, institutions and ways of life which would result from a deepening of the spiritual life, but their conception of that life itself remains far from satisfying. The situation is very well symbolized by the title of a recently published article\* on this theme: "The Old Message and the New Order." The assumption is made that although we are being

\* By Godfrey Pain, in *Community in a Changing World* (1942).

driven to the most revolutionary conceptions in the field of social reconstruction we shall be able to carry them out only in the light of the traditional religious scheme. No serious attempt is made to face the possibility that the transvaluation which is so evidently being accomplished in every other field of thought must embrace the sphere of spiritual knowledge as well.

The view of the imaginative modernist, on the contrary, is that a revolution is in progress in the religious realm which is proceeding on closely parallel lines to that which we are witnessing in the economic and political field, that corresponding to the pioneers in one sphere there are pioneers in the other, that the same degree of initiative and moral courage is called for in both, and finally that it will in course of time be discovered that it is only those groups, communities and movements which have caught the new inspiration which will be able to deal effectively with the objective problems with which we are struggling.

What does this imply for the future of religion? The essence of the matter is that the modern seeker after spiritual wisdom insists upon inclusiveness and comprehensiveness in the religious sphere. He is deeply aware that on all other levels of life—science, economics, communications, culture—we are moving forward to a state of mutual dependence. It follows that there is no hope today for a religion which does not meet the spiritual needs of all types and races of men. The modernist demands a faith which shall be universal in character—a very different thing, by the way, from a faith which, while being essentially limited, seeks to command world-wide acceptance. He is convinced also that the new religion must do full justice to the higher possibilities of science, of mysticism, of spiritualism, and even, one must dare to affirm, of esotericism. He asks that it shall give full recognition to the fact that the stream of prophecy, inspiration and seership which flows in from the

depths of our consciousness did not dry up at a certain point in history, but has continued right up to the present, and is today even increasing in power. He declines to limit his conception of scripture to that advanced by this or that historical school. And finally he demands, in the spirit of the time, that those who claim to expound to us the character of religion shall at least have some first-hand experience of what they are teaching.

For the purpose of this essay I am using the word 'religion' in a very wide sense to include, not only the attitude of those who have embraced some definite form of faith, but also of poets, philosophers and artists who are relating themselves to the Mystery in a less formal fashion. The essence of the matter is that all those who in one way or another recognise the need to look within for inspiration and guidance, and particularly the need for personal regeneration, may fairly be considered as being in one camp as opposed to the empiricists and extraverts for whom the inner subjective realm has only a relatively shadowy existence. Of course the more clearly an individual understands his relation to the Spirit within, the greater will be his power. But I am concerned here primarily, not with the variations and differences to be found amongst those who realise the deeper meaning of 'values', but with the relation of such thinkers as a body to those whose standards are basically materialistic. It is for this reason that in treating of sociological problems in these pages I have paid no attention to the divisions which exist within the field of religious thought. My concern is only with those insights, realisations and principles which the more imaginative have in common, and the possession of which, broadly speaking, places them, whether they are nominally Christians, Jews, Mohamedans, Hindus or Budhists, in opposition to any system of thought which neglects unduly the inner spiritual experience of man.

A word is called for respecting the relation of inspiration to history. I have suggested above that there is a religious note which is particular to each epoch, and that we must strike that which is appropriate to our present century. Yet the problems with which we have to deal are also peculiar to our age. But although this fact must be given full weight, it should not lead us to conclude that their distinctive nature has any great significance for those who are following the way of the Spirit, which impels us always to relate ourselves to those essentials which lie at the heart of *all* situations, in whatever age they may be encountered.

The view is sometimes advanced\* that the application to life of spiritual principles presents special problems in every age, and particularly in our modern epoch when everything has become so technical and highly organized. It is, of course, possible to make out a plausible case to support this view, but it makes little impression on anyone who has any deep mystical understanding. In the first place, it is typical of the scientific sociologist that he takes various institutions as given, and then laboriously proceeds to enquire what the conscientious religious thinker should do about them. But it should be evident that a great number of those modern complexities which present problems to the casuist appear only as a result of a loss of spiritual vision; if we were properly adjusted we should not bring them into existence at all.

Further, the nearer we draw to direct inspiration by the Spirit, the less important do such external considerations become. Naturally those religious believers who are bound by the outlook of this or that historical school will meet with special difficulties in this respect, but if a person has embraced a creative form of religion his inspiration will prove to be adequate to our distinctively modern, or indeed

\* As, for instance, by Dr. Karl Mannheim in his *Diagnosis of our Time*, 1943.

to any other, problems. For however intricate and seemingly abstract our contemporary arrangements, they involve at the root the simplest possible type of situation: the direct relation of individuals to one another, and to the Light within. Provided that this is properly realised all else will follow, whether it is a question of laying down a carpet or a policy for a nation. For the inspiration of the Spirit not only provides certain fundamental insights which are valid in all ages and countries; it moves the soul to adapt itself to the immediate and objective situation with discrimination and precision. The novel elements in our modern civilization should not be exaggerated. From the spiritual point of view technical advances mean little. Whether people relate themselves to one another in terms of chariots or automobiles, wattle or plastics, javelins or machine guns, clairvoyance or television, clans or joint stock companies, bazaar gossip or newspapers, the basic problems remain ever the same—just as a triangle remains a triangle whether it is drawn in charcoal or picked out in Neon lights.

Finally, I must say a word with regard to the angle from which I am here approaching the problem of social transformation. My concern is with that intermediate realm of thought which lies between pure religious philosophy on the one hand and the detailed treatment of economic and social problems on the other. In other words, I am attempting to indicate certain broad spiritual principles which, as I see the matter, should guide the religious thinker in dealing with sociological questions. But I leave their application to the appropriate specialists. The assumption on which I am working is that if only the right intuitions and sympathies can be stimulated in people's minds the working out of these problems on the objective plane will prove to be a relatively simple matter.\*

\* I have given a brief indication in an *Appendix* of what I conceive this to imply.

Opinions will differ as to how far any of us are yet in a position to gain a picture of the general features of a spiritual twentieth-century society. But one may safely affirm that those who are working and aspiring in this direction soon find that they are moved to approach the task of reconstruction in a new fashion. Firstly, they become conscious of being in touch with a source of inspiration and power which is denied those who are attempting to deal with these vast problems only on the secular plane. And then they find themselves awakening to novel possibilities in transforming life to which more orthodox workers in this field are for the most part insensitive. It is as if a new pattern were being woven, quietly and unpretentiously, in the very midst of the fabric of the old. And those who are inspired to confirm to it are committed to new ways and adaptations, to surprising innovations and above all to methods which in many directions entail a sharp break with the past. In a word they realise that they are playing their part in a deep-rooted process of revolution.

Perhaps the most interesting attempt which has so far been made to sketch out the general features of a spiritual form of modern society is that represented by the *Personalist Manifesto* (1938) of Emmanuel Mounier, which expresses the outlook of a revolutionary French group containing both Christian and non-Christian thinkers. Although it was drawn up first of all in relation to the particular problems confronting French society, it has a far wider reference and should be carefully studied by anyone who is interested in the application of spiritual principles to the great problem of reconstruction.

## 2. THE ROLE OF RELIGION

The first point to be emphasized in considering the function of an emancipated type of religion in relation to

the enterprise of creating a higher type of society is that religious experience is *not* merely a source of inspiration and support to sustain us in our efforts to cope with the problems of material existence. Primarily it is a means of making contact with a higher and more interior order of life, a discipline and revelation which brings man into association with the vast and potent realm of the Unseen. To be religious is to become attuned to the sphere of the metaphysical, to know reality not only in so far as it is cognizable through the physical senses, but in an interior, subjective mode as well, and thereby to gain a vision of glories and fulfilment which the earth with all its possibilities can never offer us. For even the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth, if ever it is established by men and angels, can only be but a limited expression of the more concrete reality which it reflects. Physical matter can be spiritualized, but only within the limits imposed by space-time existence. The true splendour is of further dimensions.

Nothing, therefore, could be more misleading and insensitive than the attitude towards the problem assumed by the type of psychologist who, knowing nothing of the higher possibilities of the human spirit, blandly describes religion as 'a useful form of sublimation'. This is not much better than considering ballet dancing as an aid to health, the ocean from the point of view of its salubrious breezes, or mountains from that of defensive barriers. Religion does undoubtedly serve utilitarian ends; but only in a subordinate sense.

On the other hand it is no less dangerous to go to the opposite extreme and deny the function of religion in transforming the conditions of earthly experience. In theological terms, God is not only transcendent but immanent. We cannot avoid the mystical obligation to labour to create the Kingdom. Any serious experience of the Mystery which lies behind the visible world impels us to change in

the direction of good that which lies within space and time. True illumination means creative action, association not only with the Divine Presence but also with the Divine Energy. The genuine mystic is moved to introduce into the world that order and harmony in which the nature of the Supreme is reflected on earth.

It is certainly true that a danger confronts religion in the opposite direction as well—that of undue absorption in the problems of social reform. The tendency of those who are too zealous in this direction is to lose touch, in their humanitarian ardour, with that transcendental realm of being from which they must ever draw their strength. Idealism succumbs to secularization, and the creative inspiration of the Spirit is lost.

Nevertheless, the most urgent need today is for a recognition of the practical implications of a religious faith. The fact cannot be too much stressed that all genuine religion has within it the seeds of social reform. The contemplative who is too absorbed in relating himself to the Within to turn his attention to changing the Without is evidently a morbid escapist. Although there are differences in emphasis as between our preoccupation with the subjective and the objective spheres, the principle holds that we cannot love God in any true sense without being impelled also to love the neighbour. And love signifies nothing unless it finds expression in an attempt to improve the lot of others. Spirituality means service. Authentic mysticism is dynamic: out of that fulness which results from the experience of the Divine comes an irresistible impulse to share, to give, to work positively for one's fellow men. And this again is an expression of the inward realisation that all are in essence one.

To act under this lofty inspiration is to set one's feet on a road which would ultimately lead to complete communism. The wealth of the community would be held in



common and each would take from it according to his changing needs. For at this advanced stage of development every person would be fully aware that in the spiritual realm no individual could own anything for himself; it would be realised that all things belong only to God. Nor would he wish to profit at the expense of his neighbour. Love cannot withhold. Social life would be organised on the basis of trusteeship and all contention in this field would cease. The whole conception of 'ownership' would be completely outmoded. For it would be undermined by the consciousness that the present association between 'service' and 'rewards' has its roots in selfishness and egoism. Man's natural and healthy impulse is to create, to discover, to improve. Only when he is corrupted does he think of such production as being contingent upon recompense. And only when he is corrupted, again, does he think of provision for the needs of others as a return for the services rendered by them. Possessiveness is perversity. And in any case in a society in which man's creative powers were given free expression and work was a joy and not a basis for wages there would be enough for all without any need for individual discrimination.

All this is, of course, wildly utopian. But it is nevertheless essential to perceive the direction in which the road is leading, even if it takes a thousand years to traverse it! Religion consistently pursued leads us inescapably to the ultimate establishing of a communitarian type of society. Man is moved in this direction, not by his head, but by the deeper processes of his heart.

What, however, is the relation between religious social reformers and those who are undertaking the reform of society as an end in itself? It will be clear in the first place that the great mass of those who support socialistic measures in the world today consists of victims of the capitalistic system who are naturally eager to grasp at any

opportunity of improving their unhappy condition. There is nothing idealistic about their motives; they very excusably want their share of the good things of life, and in many cases, of course, they want to revenge themselves upon the class by which they have been so cruelly exploited in the past. Their appetites and inclinations are indisputably those of the 'natural man'—and the responsibility for the fact lies largely with their rulers.

As to those people, whether privileged, or themselves members of the working class, who are inspired to reform society for genuine humanitarian and idealistic reasons, their inspiration may fairly be described as being *essentially* religious, even though they may consciously reject any transcendental interpretation of life. For they are moved in this matter by concern for others, and such concern is unmistakably of the Spirit. Nevertheless, it is important in considering their attitude and function to keep a firm grip upon the fundamental distinction between the pre-suppositions of religious and of secular reform.

In the confused world of thought in which revolutionary ideas are circulated one repeatedly meets with the claim that socialists and religious believers are both 'after all' out for the same thing: a social order founded on justice and equality. But this, of course, completely overlooks the fact that whereas for socialism material well-being is an end in itself, for religion this is only the outcome of an interior conquest of self. 'Seek ye first . . .' The aim is the same, but the implications of reaching it widely different. While the religious thinker is dedicated to the cause of building the Kingdom, he is far from entertaining the illusion that its foundations are to be sought elsewhere than in sanctification and dedication to the Supreme.

Yet with all this it would be indeed foolish to undervalue the contribution which is being made to the new order by the secular reformer. It is true that such planning will only

be properly oriented and energized when it comes fully under a religious inspiration. Otherwise it will never be able to escape the process of distortion and debasement to which it is unremittingly subjected by man's unredeemed nature. Egoism, acquisitiveness, and that confusion of mind which attends all bondage to desire can be trusted to ruin the pattern in the long run, however ingenious the safeguards against such sabotage. There is no security attaching to any enterprise which has not a foundation in the Within.

On the other hand there is a peculiar reciprocal process at work as between those who are active in the subjective and the objective sphere. Although it is true that planning needs to be directed by the inspiration of a genuine religion, it is true also that the appeal of religion may be expected to increase to the degree that social conditions have been improved by what may be described as crypto-religious reformers, of the type considered above. For only when a certain amount of work has been done on this material plane will people's minds be free to respond to higher influences.

It is now pretty certain that the Churches cannot hope to play a major part in the reconstruction of society; they have failed disastrously in performing the mission committed to them in this field. Yet as a result of the energetic efforts of 'secular' workers in the economic realm the material burden on the population may be so lightened that they will be given an opportunity, if they so desire, of responding more to the life of the Spirit—although in that case it is almost certainly to a new religion to which they will give their allegiance.\* Such an awakening would not only fill a void in their lives, but advance the progress of reform

\* For a good account of the sharp decline in religious feeling amongst the working class during the last few decades see the Rev. Joseph McCulloch, *We Have Our Orders* (1943).

itself which, as I have already urged, remains crippled if it is cut off from an interior source of illumination and power.

One can only hope that imaginative thinkers in both camps will realise the significance of this process of mutual determination.

If we consider more closely the function which is exercised by religion in aiding us with our objective tasks we find that it is that of a harmonizing and elevating medium. That is to say, for those who can respond to it (somewhere about 10 per cent of the population of these islands at the present time, it would appear) it provides as it were a zone of peace and power within which *all* activities can be carried out in a more rhythmic and powerful fashion than is otherwise possible. Whoever and wherever you are, in whatever direction you may be seeking to build and create, true religion will aid you in coordinating the forces with which you are struggling, give you access to a superior source of peace and strength, illuminate your mind from a deeper region of being than that to which you could otherwise penetrate.

It appears, therefore, as the innermost principle of life. Behind the realm of economics there lies the deeper realm of psychology, and behind psychology again the still more profound realm of the Unseen by which the other two are in the last resort conditioned. It is therefore the religious thinker alone who can justly claim to be concerned with fundamentals. From this it follows that religion, properly understood, is not a *substitute* for any other form of activity, but an endeavour to maintain association with that fount of interior life from which all our human activities can be purified and vitalized. The religious person is seeking always to invoke a Presence which shall sanctify and redeem all our earthly enterprises and bring them into relation with the Eternal. His aspiration is to divinize his activities, to express at every point and in every situation

the will, so far as it is within his comprehension, of the Great Architect of the Universe.

But God gives the soul strength only to do that which is right. Our uneasiness respecting the behaviour of priests who bless battleships and the standards of regiments and adopt an equivocal attitude to pacifism is justifiable enough. One of the reasons why orthodox religion has today fallen into such disrepute lies in the fact that religious people refuse to face properly the fact that it is a mockery to seek divine aid in maintaining institutions and systems which are based upon a violation of deep spiritual principles. It is this disposition to compromise with the debased standards of worldly life, and to convert true religion into, at the best, a comfortable and conventional humanism, which has more than anything weakened the power of the Churches today. And the inevitable consequence, in an epoch in which we are all fully awakened to the necessity for sweeping away the old social order, is that the great mass of people with progressive ideas are turning their backs on the religious way of life and putting their faith instead in energetic practical action with no other-world implications or sanctions. But in so doing they are only falling into an opposite error, although it is one which is in a large measure redeemed by the generosity of their sympathies and intentions.

### 3. THE MEANING OF THEOCRACY

From the point of view of positive expression, as opposed to contemplation, religion means the interior orientation of thought and action. This process of direction from within can be accurately described as Theocracy. I must make it plain that I do *not* mean by this term the guidance of humanity by the representatives of some ecclesiastical organization which lays claim to a mandate from on high.

What it here stands for, on the contrary, is submission by each individual to a Divine Authority within, the inspiration of which, if followed, will in course of time lead all men, both severally and collectively, to unity with one another in the creation of a new, stable and spiritual order of society.

In other words I am conceiving of that essential principle of democracy—self-determination—in more ultimate and mystical terms. The secular thinker is prepared to allow that if the ‘better side’ of men’s nature could be brought into manifestation by judicious education and an improved environment a new world might be created. But what is this ‘better side’ if we pursue the analysis of its nature to the end? To the religious philosopher at any rate it is that element in the personality which is responding to a holy and regenerative influence, that divine spark or *synderesis* within by which man is essentially related to his Creator. The mark of the saint is that he is interiorly ruled by God, not in servitude, but through a voluntary alignment of his will with one that is ultimate. He is a theocrat in the exact sense of the term.

It may well appear that this religious, and even mystical, approach to the problem is hopelessly out of relation to the immediate possibilities before us. Our reformers are struggling with the most formidable problems in the realm of practical politics, with forces which are at work on the most mundane levels, with groups and factions which are incapable of responding to this order of inspiration, the whole undertaking being carried forward in an almost exclusively secular atmosphere. The prospects for a large-scale attack on the social problem on an acknowledged religious basis are therefore remote. The assumption on which one is bound to work in this matter, if one’s principles are metaphysical, is that the religious solution will in the nature of things be seriously attempted by the majority

only when all other efforts to build up a new society have failed. For the last place where man looks for truth is in the depths of his own being.

Yet this somewhat depressing view is quite compatible with a belief in an impending religious renaissance. In spite of the general apathy, the seeds of a new life are being sown.

#### 4. THE NECESSITY FOR PRINCIPLES

Assuming, then, that it is religious insight which is destined to provide the true key to the solution of our social difficulties, we have now to consider the way in which this process seems likely to work out. First of all, we shall naturally look to religion to provide us with certain broad guiding principles to which we can relate our day to day experience.

The need for such a frame of reference needs no serious defence. If we are imaginative we have a strong impulse to refer our immediate experience to another type of knowledge of a more ultimate nature. This transcendence of immediacy can be effected by all sorts of agencies: devotion to superior personalities, poetic imagery, august rituals, high traditional symbols, the principles of a genuine metaphysic. To many, philosophical considerations are extremely unsympathetic. They suspect all rationalization, and prefer to contemplate the more enduring elements in existence in a more direct fashion. But at the best this implies a very incomplete relation to life. Once men's minds are fully awakened they cannot enjoy any real measure of serenity while they are still uncertain regarding metaphysical ultimates. They may pursue with energy all manner of momentary aims, and for long periods of time become absorbed in all sorts of projects and undertakings. But underneath they have a more or less vague realisation

that until they have attained to assurance respecting the worth and meaning of life all that they attempt has an insecure and unsatisfying character. They have a clear idea of each individual element which occupies their attention, but these elements themselves do not combine to form any intelligible pattern. There is no central principle discernible which subordinates the whole complex to order. Yet even the most extreme empiricist finds himself obliged at times to refer his practical activities to some sort of basic system or scheme. And in spite of the dangers attending academic and abstract thinking we are all aware that the man who is basing his actions on clearly thought out conceptions is immeasurably more powerful than the enthusiast whose blind and urgent concern is to 'get things done'.

The fact must also be emphasized that spiritual principles of this order do *not* depend for their authority upon objective verification as do those which are employed in the field of scientific research. In describing them as 'spiritual' I mean exactly what I say—that they are of a different order from empirical generalizations based upon scientific investigation and contingent upon its progress. To be religious is to believe that the mind by contemplation, discipline and a study of the literature of 'revelation' can attain to insights and intuitions which, although they have, of course, to be realised *in* experience, yet do not derive directly from it, and even determine in advance the modes in which we appropriate it. In a word, while impressions reach us from without, they can be clarified and interpreted only from within.

The problem of attaining to inner stability is formidable enough even under more normal conditions of existence. Today, when men's minds are bewildered by swift and disturbing historical changes, by the breakdown of traditional systems of thought and belief and the emergence of all sorts of questionable philosophies and ideologies the task



becomes immeasurably more arduous. The air is charged with speculation and uncertainty and the mass of mankind live today only on a provisional and precarious basis, constrained to satisfy only limited ends and to set before themselves only more immediate aims. They realise, more or less clearly, that it is vain to look back to the rapidly vanishing past for direction, that contemporary events are moving too rapidly and in too strange a manner for their meaning to be understood, and that future developments are almost completely incalculable, and may in addition bring yet more terrible disasters to the world.

The result for the great majority is a state of uncertainty and distress which weakens seriously their capacity to perform their daily work in the world. When familiar foundations are shaken and traditional landmarks swept away there can be no true confidence or assurance. But for a minority the crisis brings with it the possibility of penetrating to a deeper level of consciousness. Denied any true satisfaction or certainty without, they are impelled to look more deeply within. And in doing so they are proceeding in the one direction in which a fundamental solution to our social problems can be found—towards the spiritual. It is the old story that ‘man’s extremity is God’s opportunity’. Or—for those who shrink from such traditional formulations—it is only when extraversion has broken down that the deeper possibilities of introversion really present themselves to the mind. This is the situation which brings people to the psychological clinic, and it is the situation also which is compelling thousands today to scrutinize their basic assumptions in a way they have never done before.

## 5. THE CONDITIONS OF VISION

But if true vision is to be attained in this realm certain conditions must be respected. I have already, in the

previous chapter, advanced the suggestion that the humanist is not prepared to pay the full price demanded for the realisation of his aims. Practically all the vast host of people who are making serious attempts to reform the world in doing so put their faith in their normal—and what the religious thinker would describe as their unregenerate—selves. That is to say, they are working on the assumption that the most creative thing they can do is to give expression to their energies on a certain level of consciousness without making any serious attempt *to deepen that level itself*. They work and think hard, and strive to live up to the highest which they can realise. They expand horizontally, as it were, but are either indifferent to, or shrink from, the notion of putting the greater part of their energy instead into a movement in the other dimension towards profundity. They concentrate on extending their field of vision laterally instead of on the more arduous task of attaining to a deeper interior condition out of which they could perceive and act with far greater effect.

Here lies the radical issue between the secular and the religious thinker. For what the second maintains is that until, as a result of deepening your being, you come to think in different categories you will only add to the conclusions and contradictions of our modern age. The first necessity is that we in the West should divert a large measure of our attention from external problems to a study of the seriously neglected science of *being*. Then we shall at last begin to see things as they are.

The effect of such a discipline is to stimulate certain elements in man's being the activity of which brings about a profound change in his values, perspectives and categories of thought. A process of transvaluation is initiated which alters the whole mode of his thinking and acting. In terms of the poetic it may be said that he begins to develop an 'organic consciousness'. Mystically one speaks here of

the 'awakening of the heart'. And in the notation of esotericism one would describe the situation by saying that certain arcane centres in his spiritual organism are stirred into activity. But the character of this internal transformation can be made fully intelligible only to those who have themselves already to some degree experienced it.

In any case the point is that it is this concentration on the interior roots of consciousness, rather than on its impoverished flowers, that provides the true key to building a new world. Our hope lies only in facing the depths within rather than in continuing to look outwards before we are really spiritually equipped for doing so. For otherwise we shall only continue to multiply knowledge and activity on a relatively superficial plane and get nowhere in the end.

The foregoing may perhaps afford a certain justification for the marked absence in these pages of those references to sociological literature which would normally be expected in a book of this type. A mass of careful and conscientious work is being done in this field all over the world, and material of much value is being accumulated as a result. But the bulk of it tends to be ponderous, dreary or inconclusive—just because it is produced on that level of awareness which I have above described as inadequate. It all leads to relatively little—for the reason that the energy is being expended in the wrong direction.

The essence of the matter is that an excessive faith is being shown in science *alone*. Without science we shall achieve nothing; that is axiomatic. But at the same time it is also true that unless scientific enquiry is undertaken in conjunction with the development and exercise of other faculties which are related more to the 'soul' no true illumination can result. The first step here is to deepen our realisation of the significance of such elements in experience as intuition, inspiration and poetic imagination which have been so dangerously disregarded since the

influence of science became paramount in the modern era. It is a hopeful sign that in many directions psychologists, official and unofficial, are beginning to glimpse the possibilities of the *higher* alternatives to 'reason' in its more restricted sense. In other words the feminine aspect of knowledge is gradually forcing itself on our attention, and we are making the first steps towards understanding the meaning of thinking with the 'heart'.

There can be no doubt that until the processes of the reason are coordinated with deeper processes which are the outcome of 'soul-growth'—until, in fact, a profound change has taken place in our educational methods and conceptions—we shall never get down to the root of our difficulties. What the present system makes for in the field of sociological research, for instance, are endless complications, criticisms and counter-criticisms, inordinately long bibliographies, a vast aggregation of particulars which can never be reduced to order because their very accumulation is sufficient evidence that the mind has fallen away from its central and integrating vision.

Through the fact that it deals only with effects and end-processes sociology is unable to throw any deep light on the forces which really determine the character of society. It is possible, of course, to explain up to a point the vicissitudes of history in terms of various processes of compensation, reaction and dialectic. Tendencies beget their opposites, conditions are established which automatically bring into existence affirmations in the opposite direction, tyranny invites assassination, big cities promote an exile to the country, protection stimulates the defenders of free trade, scientific planning drives men towards individualism, and so on.

With all this, however, the fact remains that the emergence of these social tendencies through the activity of human personalities remains essentially mysterious. Sociolo-

gists can do no more than study the manifestations involved and compare them with one another. Like all scientists, they are concerned only with phenomena. But the mystics and poets amongst us are well aware that the inspiration to all such developments comes to mankind out of the great Unseen, from sources which are inaccessible to those whose horizon is limited by materialism. And they realise, more or less clearly, that in exploring new possibilities and experimenting with new forms and institutions men are aligning themselves with wider and deeper purposes which will one day be revealed to them. Moreover, there are students of the esoteric who claim to have some preliminary vision of such purposes even at this stage of our pilgrimage. There are other laws than those explored by physical science.

Only the ignorant and conceited will seek for illumination in the realm of phenomena; the wise have always known that the world of true causation is to be sought behind the veil of sense. The complement of science, which is excellent in its place, is seership, vision of the hidden cycles by which the outward course of events is determined beyond the frontiers of space and time. This leads us straight into the realm of the spiritistic, the magical and the occult—a fact which may disconcert the conventional. But who can seriously believe that we can solve any of our problems in a radical fashion until we have lifted the Veil of the Unseen?

## 6. THE EMERGING PATTERN

At the beginning of this chapter I suggested that new aspects of the Eternal Mystery are continually being revealed to men's minds and that when this impulse is upon them they have no alternative but to work and live out the possibilities which are thus held before them. Whether we are here concerned with progress in the sense that it is a

question of pioneers who gain a glimpse of conceptions which are absolutely new, or in the sense of establishing on a wider scale what was previously perceived only by the few, is of little moment. The point is that we have no option but to work in terms of those higher possibilities which each age holds out to mankind. We have to reckon with new intuitions and insights, with responses to rhythms and processes which have but recently disclosed themselves to men's minds, with situations which could not appear until earlier historical forces had worked themselves out.

We must do full justice to the dialectic process. It is plain, for instance, that only when Authority had fully extended its power could the claims of Individualism be distinctly conceived and vindicated. And only, again, when the full implications of Individualism became apparent to us in this modern age could we take the first step, as we are doing today, to create a new synthesis in which Individualism and Authority will be reconciled.

The philosopher who is seeking to interpret social problems from the standpoint of religion is equally compelled to reckon with the changing character of our inspiration. In the present age he is obliged to give due weight to the fact that we are moving away from rationalism into the realm of the mystical. And this means that he will have to modify accordingly his conception of the metaphysical foundations of society. For a minority today in their thinking on social problems are responding to an order of ideas which cannot be formulated along the traditional lines.

The nature of the situation can be brought out by comparing the modern religious approach to the social problem with that which found expression in the Encyclical of Leo XIII of 1881. This weighty pronouncement was concerned to build up society on a strictly traditional basis—capital and labour, private property, and the family. And given these suppositions no wiser injunctions could have

been given to the faithful. But unfortunately, although Catholic dogma remains immutable, men's conceptions of social association were undergoing a rapid process of change, and this not exclusively in the direction of deterioration. Side by side with the emergence of the most subversive doctrines there were appearing others which, even to Catholic minds, indicated an advance towards a more spiritual conception of society. Under the irresistible inspiration of the Great Spirit men were awakening to a nobler conception of human relationships and no power on earth could arrest the development.

As a consequence the Encyclical of Pius XI, forty years later, was concerned to make a few judicious concessions to Catholic socialists, while of course re-affirming inexorably the principles of his great predecessor. But meanwhile the thought of the world in respect of these problems had moved still further forward, to such a degree, in fact, that any serious prospects of dealing with it in these traditional terms had already become faint. The only teachings in the Encyclicals which retain their force for us today are the powerful exhortations which they contain towards charity and mercy, and the unqualified condemnation of all attempts to resort to violence in settling social disputes. The modern sociologist, whether his principles be secular or religious, is simply obliged to reckon with new developments in theory and practice which are altering the whole character of the situation. Consider only the changes which are taking place in our conception of legal contract, the possibilities which we are discovering in the idea of trusteeship, and in particular our modern interest in the potentialities of the social group. And these ideas again are closely associated with changes in our philosophical conception of reality and our ways of thinking generally.

## 7. GRADUALISM OR CRISIS?

In concluding this chapter I must say something regarding the mode in which this new social order seems likely to be established. What I want to suggest is that it is extremely unsafe to conclude that our progress towards emancipation will necessarily be steady and uniform. On the contrary it seems quite possible that it will involve dramas and catastrophes of the most acute type.

Scientific Humanism implies, it can scarcely be doubted, belief in the principle of Gradualism. The theory is that society will progressively be permeated by more and more enlightened ideas, there will be a steady improvement in education, institutions will step by step become more efficient, psychologists more expert, the population, under these beneficent influences, increasingly humane, healthy and intelligent.

Can we, however, really believe that this is true? In the first place such an attitude betrays an optimism which suggests that the nineteenth-century belief in inevitable progress is taking a long time to die. And in the second place it reveals an astonishing inability to profit by the experience afforded by two major wars. What these catastrophes decisively reveal is that there are dark and powerful forces locked up in humanity—and not exclusively in our former enemies either—which can destroy in a few months or years creations of civilization which have taken centuries or millenia to evolve. If they are to be overcome this can only be through spiritual forces of a superior potency, of a far more powerful order than those engendered by mildly humanizing agencies of the type which appeal to the souls of nice and decent citizens.

Again, if destruction and disaster have manifested in this unpredictable fashion, rushing in upon us from the unknown, is it not quite possible that salvation, if it is



to be vouchsafed to us, will come to us in an equally incalculable form? It is surely imprudent to assume that spiritual forces, whether sinister or celestial, operate in the same fashion as those which are manipulated by the man of science. We are here in a different dimension of experience, controlled by laws which are only understood, and then very partially, by the seers and mystics amongst us. These things are of the Spirit and not to be comprehended in a rationalistic scheme of thought.

This much at least is plain. Men of a deeper, religious type incline today to what may be termed a cataclysmic or apocalyptic interpretation of our future history. Acutely conscious of the depths to which our modern civilization has sunk, they can see any hope for humanity only in a crisis of personal regeneration. In their view all our attempts to solve the problem on gradualistic lines touch only the surface of the difficulties before us. The New Society implies the New Man. And the New Man is the product, not of mere cultural or political revolution, but of an agonizing process of rebirth. Our only hope lies in getting down to spiritual fundamentals. It is not the laboratory which will save us but the sanctuary.

To give a few instances of this tendency, I will mention first the conception put forward by Gerald Heard, whose ideas are too well known to demand recapitulation here. Briefly, he affirms that we have reached a major turning-point in our human evolution. We have exhausted the process of material advancement and the next step before us is to enter into a new dimension of consciousness. If we do not balance our awareness of externals by an inward realisation of the redeeming Timeless we are lost. The only way of saving our civilization is for a minority to cultivate by an appropriate technique true self-realisation, and thereby qualify themselves to direct and guide those who are responsible for our material destiny. Although we have

accumulated vast stores of knowledge we have attained to a disproportionately small degree of wisdom. And without wisdom we have no alternative but to go down in destruction. Aldous Huxley is, of course, working along the same lines.

Whatever reservations one may have regarding the mode in which these neo-Brahmins are conceiving the problem, and the particular means which they are advocating to attain illumination, it is at least plain that they take the view that a decisive crisis has been reached in the development of our culture. We cannot be saved by the application of science to our material problems. We must effect an interior change or perish.

It is a mark of the spiritual-minded that they are gifted with the capacity of tracing back disturbances in the social order to the secret springs of life within the soul of the individual. As a result they perceive clearly that the crucial issue at the present time is that of personal regeneration. All the evil that is upon us has its source in our failure to face our inmost selves, and all the good which it is open to us to achieve will equally be the outcome of a true process of self-realisation. The following passage from that poignant piece of autobiography, *The Midnight Hour*\* by 'Nicomachus' brings out the nature of our predicament with considerable force:

Our calamity is fundamentally a calamity of the spirit; it can only be overcome by a regeneration, both individual and communal, as profound, as realistic and as ruthless as its cause. Unless we realise and enact the realisation that the realities and laws of the spirit with which we are confronted are as iron, as immutable, as inevitable as those of physics, dynamics or mathematics and that, upon the spiritual as on the physical front, we are facing an implacable, vindictive and terrible foe, we are dwelling in a 'fool's paradise' of the soul. We are assaulted by a physical evil

\* (1943), pp. 176-177.

no less vast or mighty than that which assaults our physical realm, which is, indeed, its spawn in time. No 'Magenot Line', no 'Singapore' of the spirit, no mere policy of 'delaying action' or 'defence in depth', no mere 'decency', no august tradition, no mere 'churchmanship' or conservatism, can avail for long against this invasion of the dark; no sanctified 'good nature' can withstand this demonic nihilism. Only by an utter urgency, a 'scorched earth policy' of the spirit, an utter self-purgation and God-possession, a descent to the uttermost depths of spiritual reality and a risen and regenerated spirit militant and offensive against the Arch-Enemy can we prevail—in this 'midnight hour when all men must unmask'.

Or again, in less dramatic terms we find the same realisation expressed in the editorial article in a recent issue of a religious journal:

The whole dire political and economic situation is closely linked with psychological and spiritual problems. Consciously or unconsciously the vast majority of the British people have lost their faith in the things that are more excellent, in favour of a materialism which poisons the springs of Truth, Beauty and Goodness. The main aspects of our civilization are vulgarity and ugliness. Disharmony is rampant. Civility is mistaken for servility. Character is at a discount. Moral Courage is rare. Appetites are undisguised. . . . We are passing through a period which may indeed be the prologue of a vaster "Decline and Fall" than Gibbon ever recorded.

And as to the remedy:

The vital equality of men as members of a common humanity, with common rights, is not contradicted by the leadership and example of such an aristocracy of merit by training and breeding. Such a society would be most firmly based on a humble recognition that we are all the creatures of a Great Mystery, penetrated by Eternal Truth and Life above all physical phenomena; that naked we come into the world and naked we must go out of it; that with all our getting, the most important is to get Wisdom. Such would be a far nobler ideal for the social order, and more enduring,

than any built mainly on material scientific achievements. It would bring man nearer to God by bringing the Holy Spirit of God more intimately into the life of man.\*

Such utterances are born of a deeper insight into reality than that accorded to those humanists who—in spite of the extremely disconcerting picture of the state of modern society which is being provided for us by our sociologists—cannot bring themselves to face the subjective elements in our present problem. And there will be no need to stress the fact that the same theme is receiving an increasing degree of emphasis in the field of imaginative literature.† The Writing on the Wall is, in fact, so unmistakably plain that only those who are exceptionally insensitive can shut their eyes to it.

To be realistic in this respect is not by any means to yield to 'social pessimism'. One may take this grave view of the future and yet remain fundamentally an optimist. The point is simply that the way out of our difficulties *must* involve coming to terms, not merely with economic problems, but with the human ego.

Science without inwardness invites disaster. As I have suggested above, it is given to the spiritually sensitive to track out the manifold relations between economic conditions and the mere subtle inner states of being which they reflect and express. Moreover, we have to allow for the possibility of an underground connection between man's deeper inward condition and the appearance in the outer world of disasters or lesser afflictions which apparently have no connection with it. The existence of an external space-time

\* *Religions*, April, 1946.

† As, for instance, in the arresting novels of Claude Houghton. The title of one of his recent works, *All Change Humanity* sufficiently indicates that he must be assigned to the apocalyptic school. I would here call attention also to a remarkable novel by John Furnill, entitled *Culmination*, published in 1932, which dramatizes very effectively the present predicament of our civilization.

universe in seeming independence of the minds by which it is contemplated is nothing more than a convenient fiction useful for the limited purposes of scientific enquiry. No serious philosopher can regard this diremption of the objective from the subjective aspect of experience as fundamental. In some deep sense inner and outer are one, and a process of reciprocal determination is continuously at work between them quite apart from those more exterior adjustments of which we are normally conscious. As an instance, the connection between wickedness and earthquakes is by no means so far-fetched and silly as it looks to the thinker who is still bound by an unimaginative phenomenalism.

Equally serious must be our attitude to the role of the Elect. It is indeed extremely probable that humanity will ultimately be saved by a small minority who, in the midst of our existing chaos, will be inspired to make a new start on entirely different lines. I shall return to this important conception in a later chapter.

## *Chapter Three*

### DEMOCRACY ON TRIAL

WE in the West are committed to an attempt to establish the democratic way of life. As students of the subject have made plain, the inspiration on which we draw in this enterprise was originally religious. Our modern morality (what is left of it) is derived in a large measure from an impetus which was first given to the western world by people who consciously turned to the Divine for their direction and strength. Ethical principles represent the reflection on an exterior plane of realisations of a more interior and powerful type.

#### 1. THE PATHWAY OF FREEDOM

It is a notorious fact that any attempt to discuss political problems in the present era involves one with formidable difficulties with respect to nomenclature.\* And this affords, of course, a pretty decisive indication of the fact that we have reached the point at which one great epoch of history is closing, and another coming to birth. It indicates also, I would suggest, that the most creative possibilities are with those of the young generation who, looking primarily forwards instead of backwards, will be able to grasp intuitively and directly principles and ideas in this field which for their

\* Thus in a recently published pamphlet Professor Hayek has set forth with care and scholarship the difference between what he regards as 'true' Individualism and that abstract Cartesian rationalism which for certain historical reasons has acquired the same name. Similar complications arise, of course, in connection with such terms as Anarchism, Liberalism, Humanism and Theocracy.

elders are unduly entangled in the complications of history and tradition. Further, to the degree that they do so they will strike out fresh and suggestive terms to express their new insights and realisations. All this is closely connected with the unfolding in men and women of the intuitive, inspirational nature, which makes for an immediate relation to Reality and a recognition of the intrinsic value of things rather than a sterile intellectualism.

With all this, however, I approach the discussion of Democracy in the present chapter with a certain confidence. Although it has been defined and described in a hundred different ways we most of us have a pretty clear idea of what it ideally connotes. Its essence obviously lies in the principle of self-determination. The interior compulsion of morality is held to be superior to, and ultimately more creative than, the external compulsion exercised upon the individual by his fellow-men. Hence a heavy emphasis upon consent, persuasion, consultation, discussion, voluntary co-operation. All creative power flows from within and is the product of inner freedom. This is, of course, a fundamental religious doctrine and involves also the sanctity of the individual person. And this respect for the person, again, makes for an appreciation of the actual capacities of the individual as compared with the privileges which he may derive from wealth or social position. The doors are thrown open to merit in a way which was impossible in a feudal type of society. And of course this removal of artificial barriers has brought with it also the emancipation of women.

The assumption of those who accept this philosophy is that however long the process may take and however much confusion it may entail, it represents the royal road to social freedom. This every imaginative person recognises to be true. Unresolved conflict may be intolerable, but if it is concluded by the imposition of the will of one party upon

that of another, nothing either real or permanent is achieved. Joy and creativeness result only from reconciliation, synthesis, dedication to a common purpose. Whence it follows that force must be absorbed rather than resisted, adversaries met half-way, opposition transcended in a higher unity, patience and good will exercised to a supreme degree. All of which again is essentially religious in its inspiration.

Considerable restrictions on personal liberty are naturally implied in the very character of social life. But in the democratic state it is the people themselves who determine, through their elected representatives, what impositions shall be placed upon them for the common good. Although the ordinary citizen may not understand the business of government he can at least be trusted to choose those who will conduct it on his behalf. And he should have a voice in the conduct of every organization—factory, laboratory, school, community—with which he is directly associated. Although direction must always come from above, it should be approved and not imposed.

There is no question, of course, of pretending that men are equally endowed; their equality is essentially metaphysical. But they should be given the opportunity of doing the kind of work to which their endowment entitles them. And apart from differences in this respect, their human needs in respect of medical care, recreation, housing and working conditions should be properly met.

Such is the classical doctrine. It provides us with ideals which we know well we cannot afford to abandon. For the alternatives are either an impossible reversion to the feudal system or a colourless existence under a totalitarian regime. Yet at the same time painful experience has now taught us that they are only ideals, and that unfortunately our western society is for the most part democratic only in name. Majority rule is largely a fiction. The plain truth is that



the mass of the population are to an appalling degree at the mercy of the representatives which they are supposed to control, and that in any case they are so oppressed by the existing economic system that the political liberties which they nominally still enjoy amount in reality to very little.

## 2. LIBERALISM AND LIBIDO

How this state of affairs has developed is now plain. The key to the whole situation is the essential weakness of that Liberalism from which democracy has drawn its dynamic. Its limitations are so evident to us today that they need only be briefly considered here. The root of the matter is that the liberal takes his stand on a philosophy which is largely negative. His supreme object is to release men from the bondage which has been imposed on them for centuries past by autocrats of various types. His ideal is to avoid interference with individuals and institutions from outside; his constant appeals are for 'hands off' this or that; he is out to resist at all costs anything in the nature of 'encroachment'.

In so far as Liberalism means an affirmation of the natural rights of man one of course accepts its claim without question. Freedom is clearly the foundation of all true civilization. But it is also most important to realise just how far the principle takes us. For where the liberal breaks down is evidently in respect of the *positive* element in the creation of culture. Tolerance is essentially a negative virtue. The widespread enjoyment of democratic privileges in western Europe for decades past had led, by the outbreak of the second world war, to a situation in which millions of individuals were free—to give unrestricted expression to their petty, uninspired, vulgar and self-regarding interests. Liberty for the most part only gave scope to mediocrity to

display its unlovely nature. Freedom was interpreted as licence to resort to murderous competition, to satisfy the most commonplace inclinations, to bring into existence unimpeded a low-grade, bourgeois type of existence. And it gradually became evident that Liberalism, although its representatives espoused enthusiastically the cause of culture and idealism, was entirely inadequate to elevate and ennoble the impulses for which it had provided such opportunities for manifestation.

Nor is the reason far to seek. The typical liberal is extremely tolerant, and above all reasonable. But his disposition is towards superficiality and innocence. His operations are conducted essentially in daylight. He shrinks from evil and his rationalistic cast of mind precludes him from penetrating into the more arcane and obscure levels of experience. As a result he lacks that inwardness and depth which would give him power over those forces which alone can overcome the darker impulses in the human soul. The great mysteries of redemption and regeneration are beyond his power of comprehension. He is the principal supporter of democracy, but he is of little help to us in struggling with its unforeseen and disturbing implications.

For we have reached a situation in which high principles and idealistic sympathies alone are palpably insufficient to save us from destruction. The history of modern totalitarian regimes has made at least one thing plain, and that is that a nation must be fully aroused before its institutions can be changed. True, they have applied this principle in the most sinister fashion, and for the most degraded ends. But we can learn from them the inescapable lesson that passion is the driving force of social transformation. Our problem today in the West is that of arousing a corresponding passion in noble instead of debased terms, of discovering a spiritual equivalent to blind and destructive fanaticism. And it should surely be plain that the only way in which we can

reach this depth is by the renewal of religious experience. Not that we can hope in an age of science for a widespread religious renaissance. But it is at least essential that a minority should touch the springs of illumination and power and inspire and strengthen the rest—or alternatively, lay the foundations of a new order outside the frontiers of our distracted civilization.

Without such a leaven society, in spite of all the efforts of our experts and planners, will never be touched with the true regenerative fire. We are beginning to realise that beneath the surface on which they are conducting their relatively facile operations influences are at work in society which can be negated only by intense moral effort. To put it plainly, the vast mass of unregenerate humanity by which the world is today populated will be led out of their apathy and confusion only by those who have themselves become quickened with a new life. The key which we are seeking is to be found only in the depths, in those depths which have been faced by the religious soul alone. In order to liberate in the world those redemptive influences which are needed to dispel the darkness in which mankind is today immersed a minority at least must manifest a light which is kindled only as the outcome of deeply mystical experience. Only the power of the Spirit can give us command over the tremendous forces which we have liberated by our triumph in the technical field.

It is natural enough that in the light of all this experience thoughtful people have accepted the fact that our whole social system will have to be extensively modified. The ideals remain. But the path towards them is more toilsome, protracted and dangerous than the earlier apostles of freedom had given us to believe. What does it involve? This no man, of course, can say. But certain elements in the situation at least are beginning to stand out in relief.

In the first place it is plain that we are confronted with a

formidable task. If we accept the democratic ideal we are bound to reject any system of improvement which is imposed from without by force, by plausible appeals to human appetites, or by mass hypnosis. Although various emergency measures may be called for, it remains true that reform has no significance unless it bears a fairly close relation to the moral attainment of the majority of those who are undertaking it. The wise are aware that Providence, or whatever you may choose to call the Spirit which shapes our human destiny, has so arranged the world that, however ingenious you are, you will never get round the obligation to achieve something more deep and searching than organization. Either you will be unable to bring the utopian system you have conceived into existence, or if you do, its working will be hopelessly distorted and obstructed by the undeveloped personalities who are attempting to put it into operation. A change in the formal arrangements of society, dramatic though it may be, ultimately does little to alter the fundamental situation. Whether the machine has a tendency to go too fast or too slow, the morality of the people will in the end bring its operation into relation with their basic aspirations and sympathies.

We can legislate progressively only in so far as human nature has changed for the good. But unfortunately any real progress in this direction can only be accomplished in the course of centuries. And this is exactly where our problem lies. We are precluded by our principles from resorting to force—and yet if we place our faith instead in a process of natural evolution the prospects for the future are indeed dim. Any real democratic advance demands a gradual and thoroughgoing re-education of the whole population, producers and consumers alike. Basic reconstruction means such things as abjuring the profit-motive, forgoing the consumption of luxuries, equalizing education, co-operating with a planned economy, sacrificing

social privileges, transforming oneself, in fact, into a different kind of being.

As things now stand, however, the life of the mass of men is conditioned by a tissue of attachments and egoisms: sex, power-seeking, possessiveness, class-consciousness, domesticity at the expense of citizenship, deep-seated prejudices, vanity, fear—everything, in fact, that is brought to light in the clinic of the psycho-therapist when things become too bad. To reverse these powerful currents, which are reinforced every hour of the day by the individual's environment and his inherited tendencies, is obviously an enormous undertaking, and every intelligent person must see that it will demand, not decades, but centuries of toil and striving.

Although the process in its more extreme form may call for the highest degrees of heroism, sacrifice and imagination, the first stage of the enterprise evidently consists in a sober realisation of the conditions in which we are involved, and of the formidable problems entailed in creating a new order. Before we can really begin on the task we must first of all 'sober up' and face various negative considerations which in the past we have had a strong disposition to overlook.

### 3. MAXIMA AND MINIMA

In the first place it is plain that we can no longer rest content with *minimal* standards of attainment. In estimating the value of any culture everything depends, of course, upon the norms to which we refer it. Liberalism, for instance, has considerable achievements to its credit, but they are rendered plausible only by presenting them in themselves and not in relation to still higher possibilities. Thus before the war we were constantly assured that the progressive little Republic of Myopia, established like its

neighbours by the Treaty of Versailles, had in the course of a few brief years instituted an admirable system of social insurance, opened a multitude of new schools, practically eliminated unemployment, improved communications enormously, extended the franchise to women and, of course, trained a small but highly disciplined army to defend its newly created frontiers. Admittedly all these developments represented in one respect a real advance on the state of affairs which existed before the day of liberation dawned, when ignorance, poverty and oppression dominated the scene. But the fact remains that the new system which was established embodied so many essentially vicious features that it provided little real hope for the future. That is to say, the basic conception of, for example, education, labour and recreation were unacceptable from the standpoint of a really spiritual society, and as a result the whole structure was inherently instable.\*

This disposition to misrepresent the true situation by instituting comparisons only with a still more inferior order of existence was, of course, powerfully reinforced by the second world war. For the Nazis were indisputably on such a low level that the door was open for a campaign of self-glorification on the part of the western democracies which easily eclipsed that provoked by the contest of 1914-1918. Confronted by the spectacle of appalling bestiality and inhumanity offered by the Nazi rulers, the sponsors of

\* Everything depends on the point of view. Regarded from one angle, civilization may be a source of pride. Seen through the eyes of a sensitive artist, on the contrary, it looks like this:

'Civilization is drugs, alcohol, engines of war, prostitution, machines and machine slaves, low wages, bad food, bad taste, prisons, reformatories, lunatic asylums, divorce, perversion, brutal sports, suicides, infanticide, cinema, quackery, demagoguery, strikes, lock-outs, revolutions, putches, colonization, electric chairs, guillotines, sabotage, floods, famine, disease, gangsters, money barons, horse racing, fashion shows, poodle dogs, chow dogs, Siamese cats, condoms, pessaries, syphilis, gonorrhoea, insanity, neuroses, etc., etc.'—Henry Miller, *The Cosmological Eye*, 1945, p. 173.

democracy could scarcely resist picturing themselves as the representatives of a noble and enlightened type of regime. In contrast to the repulsive ideology of Hitlerism, that of western liberalism inevitably acquired a graciousness and distinction which was evidently more than its due. The temptation to compare oneself to something still more primitive instead of bowing before a superior excellence is always difficult to resist, and it was inevitable that democracy emerged from the struggle with the totalitarian fanatics imbued with a certain measure of self-righteousness and complacency.

The same issues are raised for us again today by the conflict between our traditional conception of personal freedom and that developed by Marxian communists. It is natural and appropriate that, confronted by their subversive theories, we in the West should be acutely conscious of the basic character of the principle on which we are taking our stand, and of the long fight which was required to establish it. But the fact remains that we are concerned in this matter only with a minimum condition of healthy democratic life.

And there are indications in many directions that we are awakening to this fact, and beginning to evaluate our achievements, not in relation to perverted systems of ideas, but in relation to the stern realities of objective existence—with the result that there is a hope of seeing them in a more just perspective. We are discovering that superiority over Hitler is not the same thing as adequacy to the demands of life.

#### 4. CORRUPTION AND ORDER

When we look at the situation in this more sober frame of mind we find ourselves obliged to face the fact that we have reached a position of stalemate. Now that the terrible implications of our modern industrial civilization are

beginning to appear in all their completeness intelligent people are realising that we are confronted with a problem that is inherently insoluble on the present level. Through the reckless gratification of a multitude of basically incompatible egoisms we have brought into existence a situation which by its very nature is incapable of being reduced to order. We are shuffling and re-shuffling a collection of cards which do not collectively form a pack, manipulating the bits of a jig-saw puzzle which can never be fitted together in its entirety.

A social system the working of which implies giving free play simultaneously to such factors as advertizing, the activity of armament firms, gangsterdom, radio, press and film sensationalism, easy divorce, the mechanization of human labour, and a hundred other similar tendencies is a civilization which cannot be ordered in the sense that, say, classical Chinese civilization could be ordered. Each separate activity undermines, distorts and contradicts every other. Beyond a certain point viciousness, by a salutary principle, reduces the organism to such an extreme condition of distress that it is compelled either to perish or to change its fundamental rhythms altogether. No legislators, however resourceful they may be, can now do more than barely preserve our present social order from collapse during the transitional period in which we are laying the foundations for something better. Whether they admit the fact or not, all their arrangements amount to nothing more than emergency measures.

Those who have arrived at this realisation will never remain satisfied with progress *within* an essentially corrupted regime. Although all sorts of adaptations will be called for to tide over the transitional period of crisis, they will possess no radical significance. The object of the realistic reformer is to create a type of social order in which people can truly fulfil themselves. But as long as our indus-



trial system remains what it is this is clearly impossible. For what men and women are called upon to do in factories and workshops does not correspond to any profound impulse in their beings. There can be no true correlation between the processes of the creative spirit and the processes of a debased type of production. Of course thousands of people may consciously enjoy doing such work, but this is very far from implying that they ought to derive satisfaction from it. For the artificiality of their lives has perverted their inner feelings to a disastrous degree. Giving the public what it wants is never more than a matter of expediency; the serious legislator is concerned to persuade it instead to accept what, seen from the highest standpoint, is really good for it. Hence we have to conclude that a fundamental element in the process of correlating impulse with activity is psychological re-education. People must be aided in discovering what at a deeper level they are directly impelled to do.

But the really fundamental problem, of course, is that of finding a deep and genuine source of inspiration to sustain us in the tremendous undertaking of creating a new world. And here we must begin by recognising the existence of certain factors in the equation which have only a negative significance. Thus in the first place we should have no illusions regarding the fact that a purely deterrent agency has no creative function. Here again we become involved with the attitude of our scientific humanists and their extraordinary indifference to non-scientific disciplines. Thus in the course of a recent broadcast Professor J. B. S. Haldane made the following remarks :

Science is going to make us behave better, or else to kill us. Everyone knows now that we should have avoided the war which has just ended had our government kept its promise to abide by the Covenant of the League of Nations. If our governments go on breaking promises of this kind we shall

be destroyed by fire from heaven, to use the old phrase. The challenge, then, amounts to this. It is not enough to behave as morally as our forefathers did. We have got to behave better than they did, because we live in a world where the consequences of collective wrong-doing are much more dangerous.\*

This scientific authority would be horrified if an amateur presumed to pronounce on a technical point in eugenics, yet he casually throws off a philosophical judgment of this order as if there were no such thing as expert opinion to be referred to in this field also.

And surely it is not difficult to perceive that the corresponding specialist would treat such a pronouncement with considerable reserve. No true moral inspiration or power was or could be ever derived from a mere fear of consequences. A deterrent principle has its place in the scheme, but it is essentially sterile, since it has its root in weakness and fear.† The theory that the multiplication of evil devices will provide a substitute for that control over behaviour which comes from interior discipline is so patently superficial that it stands as self-condemned. It is certainly true that the atom bomb constitutes for us all a terrible warning. But in so far as it merely increases the prudence of governments it provides no creative inspiration for humanity. If its discovery helps forward our moral evolution this is because people are thereby awakened to the imperative need to develop a positive attitude to human association, to cultivate a sense of brotherhood and unity. In other words science in this matter is aiding us only to the extent that it turns our minds to humanism and religion.

Closely connected with this problem is the fact that no

\* *The Listener*, 2.5.46.

† Cf. Coleridge: "We are told by history, we learn from our experience, we know from our own hearts that fear, of itself, is utterly incapable of producing any regular, continuous, and calculable effect even on an individual; and the fear which does act systematically upon the mind always presupposes a sense of duty as its cause."

pressure exercised upon individuals from the outside will ever provide a radical solution to our moral problems. It is a fundamental principle that the external restraint of wrong-doing is immeasurably weaker than that exercised from within. If self-control fails then control from without can do relatively little to correct the situation. No amount of righteous activity by reformist leagues, preventative bodies and invigilating associations can produce one-tenth of the effect which results from spontaneous civic virtue; the resources at the disposal of anti-social personalities are too extensive and complicated in nature. The sheer amount of time, money, labour and legislation which is called for to expose and arrest irregular behaviour indicates decisively that personal morality is the only sure foundation of an ordered society. Once the ethical level declines no amount of external supervision will ever serve to restore the balance. If the penalties are not primarily imposed from within the game is irretrievably lost.\*

It is to be noted, however, that there is an important difference between the mere mechanical application of legal enactments against crime and reforms prompted by a high idealism. One implies no more than the protection of society against criminals for which it is ultimately responsible, and the other a deep concern for humanity. It is only in purely external terms that Quaker reformers and American "G men" can be said to be fighting on the same front.

But even when we reach the point of recognising the

\* This principle has an important application in the realm of government. The object of a democratic regime is to ensure a minimal control over the people's rulers *from without*. But 'the consent of the governed' has proved to be largely a myth. Politics has degenerated into a technique for persuading the masses that they have command over the situation which is being imposed upon them. The real truth is that the welfare of the community will always depend to a high degree upon the conscientiousness and integrity of a small group of legislators and administrators who are exercising control over themselves *from within* under the inspiration of some such ideal as *noblesse oblige*.

need for a positive morality we still have to take account of certain negative considerations. It is important, for instance, to realise that spiritual power and insight originate essentially from within, and are not directly the outcome of experiences imposed on the soul from outside. The essence of the matter is that attrition will never *by itself* effect regeneration. It may entail a salutary discipline, but it will not spiritualize the individual unless he actively co-operates with the process and perceives its creativeness.

These theological considerations, although they may appear to be remote, have actually a close application to our present situation. We are all today submitted to varying degrees of constraint and limitation. But this fact by itself will do little to provide us with the moral inspiration we require in order to deal with the formidable tasks before us. "Sticking it", although a healthy and manly process, only furnishes a very partial answer to the problem. There are a number of people today who are prepared, without protestation and recrimination, to resign themselves to a less spacious and privileged way of living. But although they have our respect we must not lose sight of the fact that deprivation is not the same thing as voluntary renunciation—any more than (what many forget) a victim is the same thing as a martyr. Only a developed minority are capable of appropriating hardship and frustration creatively. It is one thing to put a good face on going without what you would like; another to sublimate your desires. And the effects of the two processes are vastly different. For while the first may make, at the most, for character and self-control, it is the second, and the second alone, which liberates those spiritual powers which really transform both the individual and society.

The driving force of the creative thinker and the true builder is derived from elevating the passions of the ordinary sensual individual to a higher plane. About this

psychology and religion are in complete agreement. You cannot deny life; you can only liberate it on a more lofty level. We shall not get a new society until those who have renounced their former attachments direct their passion voluntarily into new and more creative channels. A change of habits which is effected only by external compulsion has relatively little significance. The whole system of relationships is still there within—as with a clock which goes on working whether it has hands on its face to record the fact or not. The man who would instantly resume his privileged position given the chance may be accommodating himself to necessity in a commendable fashion, but his fundamental situation remains essentially unchanged.

There are those also who enter upon a new era with agonizing and devastating experiences behind them. Our sympathy for them is without measure. But we shall not do them any injustice in emphasizing that the spiritual realisation which is awakened by the impact upon us of even the most severe blows of fate is not necessarily of an advanced order—hard as this truth may sound. The collapse of our accepted system of ideas, the cruel destruction of what we hold dear, the effect of unfamiliar and searching experiences serve to bring into manifestation the individual's innate character. The weak and the strong stand revealed. And the effect in some cases is to turn the mind to higher things. But that specifically spiritual insight and power which are needed to transform our present order are essentially the products of a different order of experience—association with what the religious thinker understands by reality. If the more discerning amongst us have passed through certain strengthening experiences, all the better. In any case without much suffering nobody can attain to a true measure of enlightenment. Yet with all this we may live to witness the fact that leadership in this field may pass largely into the hands of those whose

trials have been principally on the spiritual plane, and who have as a result won through to authentic illumination.

### 5. DECENCY IS NOT ENOUGH

When we turn to the creative aspect of the question we are met first of all with the fact that—to describe the situation in its simplest terms—decency is not enough. The world is filled with men and women who have a genuine respect for such things as human dignity, truth, courtesy and honour, and a faith in the power of such qualities as idealism and love to transform society. Such people are disgusted by any exhibition of barbarism; they are kind, quiet, polite, ‘nice’ and disciplined. And they form the great mass of those whose sympathies are with the progressive tendencies in the world. Conscientious, thoughtful and considerate, they cause others very little injury or suffering—and they are equally incapable of rising to the plane of true passion, still less to that of heroism, martyrdom or sainthood. Their philosophy, in so far as they have elaborated such a thing, lays a considerable emphasis upon the principles of reason and freedom, but is usually inadequate to the reality of the mysteries of evil, redemption and grace. They can play a valuable part in maintaining a civilization, but they are not sufficiently deep or powerful either to bring it into existence or, when it is established, to save it from destruction.

What is called for, therefore, is passion in its more exalted sense, a dedication to high ideals which is yet free from violence and fanaticism. Everything depends upon attaining to a new and a more enlightened attitude towards the problems of man and society. This fact is recognised to some degree even by those reformers who put their trust principally in the possibilities of science. Thus in analysing the elements in the task before us Professor Bernal, in the

course of a recent broadcast address, affirms plainly that 'a new outlook and transformation of values are needed to effect these changes. . . . The essentially immoral influence of capitalist individualism must be replaced by a morality which emphasises intelligent working together for common good.'\* This is certainly realistic. But one cannot help being struck by the marked difference between the exact and detailed control which such thinkers have over the technical scientific aspect of the problem of reconstruction and the vague uncertain fashion in which they conceive of the deep moral issues which it involves. 'A new outlook and transformation of values' is a big order! Can science as such provide us with it? Even scientists themselves will hesitate to embrace such a belief. We are forced therefore to the conclusion that in order to gain light on the problem of producing that spiritual dynamic on which the whole technological enterprise depends we must turn to specialists of another order, to those people who can really claim to understand the inner life of man.

Nor in this matter will the purely scientific type of psychologist afford us great help either. For it is a question, not simply of studying people's behaviour, but of quickening their response to the ideal, of releasing those forces in men's souls which make for self-dedication, heroism and devotion to lofty purposes. Does any serious person imagine that such powers can be effectively liberated unless in some way or other we become receptive to the inspiration of religion?

\* *The Listener*, 4.4.46.

## *Chapter Four*

### REVOLUTION AND REGENERATION

IN the preceding chapter I advanced the view that the crisis through which our civilization is at present passing can only be surmounted if we are prepared to deal with it in really radical terms. And this for the thinker whose outlook is religious means getting down, not merely to economic and political, but also to spiritual realities. Nevertheless, it is essential to recognise that every contribution to reform, on whatever level, has its part to play in the final resolution of our difficulties. Although from the strictest point of view only an absolutely fundamental transformation of our social structure can save us, it does not follow that improvements within the framework of the existing system have not their function to perform.

However much we may dislike patching and temporizing, we have to face the fact that we cannot leap to the end of the road at a bound. Lesser constructive modifications are not to be dismissed as mere compromises and half-measures, even though they serve to consolidate institutions which should ideally be swept away immediately. For the true significance of political changes lies in the education of those who conceive and execute them. Man can only work on what is real to him at the time. We can only live our way through experimentally to the new society, and each must give his best according to his lights from the place where he is actually standing. It is often better to identify oneself generously with an uninspired project than to stand fastidiously apart through allegiance to an ideal which is actually unrealisable.



## 1. THE REFLEX OF VISION

At the present epoch we are witnessing attacks on the social problem from a wide variety of angles. Before discussing, in a later chapter, the theocratic conception of reconstruction I shall briefly examine the most representative of them in turn. But I must begin with some observations on the psychology of the reformer.

All progress is secured by overcoming the massive inertia of tradition. To be 'progressive' is therefore to find oneself fundamentally at war with a body of conservatives, imperialists, 'die-hards' and 'bloody capitalists' whose only concern is to maintain at all costs an outmoded order of society which affords them unjustified privileges at the expense of the toiling masses. And so on, and so on.

It will be evident that no religious thinker will be satisfied with this simplification of the issues. For if his religion is genuine he will have been led to unite within himself all manner of opposite qualities. Thus, since he has a profound sense of evil he takes a sombre view of man's present condition. Yet since he has also a profound sense of the essential spirituality of all human beings he works for the future in a spirit of hope and faith.

In the same way in the field of politics he is at once liberal, conservative and revolutionary in his outlook. He is aware that without tolerance, freedom and the fullest possible respect for personality nothing creative can be achieved. Again, as his eyes are turned towards the Eternal he is no advocate of impetuous reform; he respects the slow working of the law of cycles. He appreciates the significance of the venerable, the slow-changing, the local and the concrete. He gives full value to the emotional elements which are involved in any particular situation and knows that men's deepest loyalty to a cause is only secured when

they have properly assimilated and reflected upon what is offered them for the future.

Yet at the same time he perceives with penetrating clarity the corruption and decadence of the age in which we are living and stands firmly for a new and higher order of life. This makes him a revolutionary in the fullest sense of the term.

In a word, since he is attuned to the Timeless he is concerned in every situation to preserve a proper equilibrium between the old and the new.

It is clear, however, that although all these three schools have a claim on our attention our chief concern in the present epoch is with the last—the socialistic revolutionaries. Everything depends upon how far we can persuade them to achieve their aims in such a way that they pay due respect to those elements in life for which their opponents stand, and in particular to the basic principles of the spiritual life.

Here we have to take account of that interesting type, the reformer who is deeper than his creed, the man whose avowed principles do not do justice to the inspiration to which his soul is really responding. I would describe such people as crypto-religious. They may be consciously strongly anti-religious in their views. Or they may vaguely recognise God as a presence somewhere in the background of the world's activities. In either case they rely essentially in dealing with life upon their native human energies and ideas. The light of the Beyond does not transform and irradiate their thinking as it does that of the mystic and the seer. In a word, they concern themselves with what for others is the life of God at the stage in which it finds expression on the humanistic plane in terms of vitality, beauty, reason and moral achievement.

The person of this type does not, like the religious thinker, dedicate and sanctify these manifestations by experiencing, interpreting and expressing them as modes

of the divine activity. He has no impulse to refer them to anything higher than themselves. He is not interested in the source of activities, but in activities themselves. But this does not prevent him from being, at his best, a great force in the world. For although his philosophy must be regarded as inadequate, his sympathies are profound and in the right direction, and his intuitions clear and decisive.

Does it matter that he is unable to bring into his outer consciousness the deeper source of his impulses and enthusiasms? From one point of view, not in the least. But from another, decidedly yes.

To conclude that this merely reflex awareness is sufficient to meet our more serious human needs would be to fall into the phenomenalism and superficiality which is so characteristic of our age. If the Unseen is the supremely real, then it follows inescapably that the people who have reached the point of consciously attuning themselves to it are drawing upon a power and inspiration which the naturalistically-minded can receive only in part. What is achieved by implication cannot in the nature of the case be so creative as that which involves a direct relation to its source. There can surely be nothing more potent in its outworkings than concentration on the Real. For we become that which we contemplate—a mystical principle the depth of which few appreciate today.

In any case we are bound to conclude that moral behaviour which is based on native character alone without any reinforcement from religious experience is in the nature of the case a precarious manifestation. Although we must be duly thankful for such incomplete achievements, we must also keep in mind the fact that the standards of social behaviour in general are determined by the dominant philosophy of the age, which is unquestionably making for a decline in ethical standards, an ever weaker grasp of

fundamentals and a drying up of the inner springs of spiritual life.

With all this, however, we must not lose sight of the fact that a person can be profoundly religious in his sympathies and responses while still remaining formally a humanist or a humanitarian who belongs to no religious communion and has no conventional ecclesiastical allegiances.

Further, we have to consider that those people who are vindicating a religion against a purely humanistic philosophy are for the most part pleading, not simply for belief in God, but for the acceptance of various theological beliefs which most intelligent people today feel to be unjustified and untenable. While finally, to make matters still worse, we are presented with the repellent spectacle of thinkers whose religion is largely a dead formalism yet who repudiate the manifestations of deep and passionate natures on the ground that, for technical and formal theological reasons, their attitude is unacceptable.

We have, of course, to bear in mind that the achievements of people of outstanding ability and distinction are not to be adopted as a standard for all. In all discussions regarding capacities, disciplines and attainments one leaves out of account the exceptional individual. There are people who can dispense unconcernedly with the normal extra clothing demanded by winter. There are others who combine immense fortitude with a complete indifference to moral ideals and systematic disciplines, or who know and understand with a minimum of intellectual training. But vitamins, overcoats, ethics and education must nevertheless remain permanent elements in our social scheme. The value of a system is not to be measured by the personalities which exceptionally appear within it. Remarkable people emerge in all sorts of surprising circumstances and settings, and we must be wary of attributing their excellencies to

their nominal allegiances and philosophies. Our criterion must be the wide and general influences which are shaping society as a whole, our concern the representative individual.

When we turn to the case of the average reformer who is no deeper than the philosophy by which he is consciously living the problem becomes more straightforward. Broadly speaking, the aims which he sets before himself are satisfactory enough. He has a real concern to create a decent type of social order in which the appalling inequalities between the rich and the poor shall be properly adjusted. And up to a point he is able to conceive of a type of social existence in which all the different sides of human nature are given free and balanced expression. But we have to recognise that the definition of aims is by far the easiest element in social transformation. Planning and designing are relatively easy. We all know pretty clearly the sort of life we should like to lead, and it is not a very difficult matter to manipulate on paper the plastics, bus services, hospital arrangements and green belts involved so as to produce a satisfactory pattern. For the whole enterprise is conducted on the intellectual plane.

But when people who are moved by these ideals set about realising them the realities of the situation emerge. And here we first of all come up against the psychology of the modern reformer—the man who is living in a thought sphere which fosters outer awareness at the expense of inner realisation to a positively dangerous degree. What do we find as a result?

In the first place, since objects and institutions exist for him primarily as ideas or conceptions which can be easily converted on the mental plane into alternative forms, he is in constant peril of being deficient in sentiment and humanity—and thus of neglecting what, as I have already insisted above, are the real factors in the equation. Moreover, in the present age in which reform is closely associated

with scientific thinking, this danger is seriously increased. When the mental atmosphere in which we are living is heavily charged with abstract conceptions—and science, with its treatment of the individual as a member of a class, is always working in this direction—it is unavoidable that our sense of the concrete, the unique and the distinctively human should be steadily weakened.

Again, the psychology of the average reformer cannot but give grounds for misgivings. As we may learn from the psychologists, his eagerness to change externals is usually in a large measure only an expression of his reluctance to face the more searching obligation of changing himself. He prefers the easier and more exciting path offered by identification with some movement or school, with the result that he projects into the social realm his own unresolved conflicts and actually contributes very little to the improvement of the world. This is, of course, inevitable, for as long as a person is still living in a state of unreality any work which he does will be invested with an unreal character as well; the 'job' partakes of the same illusion as the individual who is performing it. No-one who is not properly established within can establish anything permanent and solid without.

It is out of the question to enter at this point into an analysis of the manifold ways in which people of this type attempt to compensate for their failures in the more intimate and searching sphere of their personal lives; this is a matter regarding which the reader must consult the psycho-therapists. The point I want to emphasize is that we are concerned here with an issue with respect to which the religious thinker remains absolutely firm: the first task of the righteous man is to struggle with his own personal limitations. For the wider social good can flow only from the good which is born in each human heart. To think otherwise is to be seduced by dreams and phantasies. Let

us face fairly the fact that the extraverted egoist is one of the major perils of our age.

As for the violent revolutionary, the perils of *his* psychology are even more patent. His hatreds may indeed be forgivable, since they spring in part from a deep and genuine concern for the oppressed. But only in part. For in other respects his embittered aggressiveness towards the privileged speaks so transparently of envy and greed that it will deceive only the simple. To begin with, his attitude is greatly determined by the consumption and production of ideology. This from the point of view of the religious thinker is a vicious tendency. For while no serious person can dispense with some form of abstract formulation to systematize and stabilize his opinions, ideology is for obvious reasons a very indifferent substitute for such a frame of reference. It involves always the most dangerous simplifications, a violent, fantastic and disputatious attitude of mind, death to all true personal responsibility and originality, and in particular insensitiveness to those unique and indefinable elements in every situation on respect for which all effective action depends. As in every other field of thought, the abuse of abstract thinking signifies the end of all true culture.

Further, that hatred which provides the dynamic for so much revolutionary activity is a fundamentally destructive principle which is as disastrous to the individual who yields to it as to the person against whom it is directed. A philosophy which eliminates forgiveness is in conflict with the basic character of reality. Nothing, for instance, could be psychologically more unsound than the contemporary Russian cult which consists in combining generosity to one's friends with mercilessness to one's enemies. For sooner or later the principle of hatred which is thus not merely tolerated, but actually fostered, in the hearts of the masses will become directed against those in their midst with

whom they are dissatisfied, and this fissiparous process will tend to continue until each man finds himself turned against his neighbour. Such is the law. The activity of the germs of enmity in the human heart cannot be localized by the policies of rulers and administrators in accordance with their shrewd and careful calculations. They will irresistibly multiply and sooner or later invade provinces where they are not wanted. However arduous the path, the only realistic ethic is that which is based upon the vision that all are essentially one and that the only true advancement is the advancement of the whole.

This the majority of progressive people today are increasingly realising. They are manifesting a growing sympathy for the reformer, for the individual who is seeking, within the framework of legislation and democratic conventions, to improve the lot of the oppressed. But the agitator, the subversive doctrinaire, the fanatic whose driving force is hatred and vindictiveness, whose aim is to sow everywhere the seeds of discord and violence, to incite to revolution and anarchy, is steadily losing in their eyes whatever prestige he originally possessed. However outrageous the wrongs under which men suffer, they will never, one must believe, be fundamentally remedied by a recourse to force. Jesus emerges in the end as a more profound seer than any of the gods of left-wing ideology. Peace, forgiveness, tolerance, patience, negotiation—the path is infinitely long and hard. But have we, after all, any real grounds for assuming that it should be otherwise?

There will always, of course, be those whose legitimate function it is to protest, incriminate and expose. But it remains true that anyone who is engaged in such work is compelled to descend to the level of the evil which he is attempting to negate, and is at the same time giving it substance by the very fact of declaring war upon it. Activity of this order may have been demanded on a wide scale in



the earlier stages of our emancipation from the past. But a time is approaching when men, if they are sensitive, will be inspired to fight with the infinitely more potent weapon of spiritual affirmation—that affirmation which proceeds by ignoring rather than by deliberately opposing the darkness which is to be overcome. The light is intensified, and the shadows of necessity retreat.

## 2. SOUL AND SOCIETY

What it all comes to is that whatever political school or party we are concerned with, the principle applies that self-discipline is the foundation of effective thought and action. This is, of course, a commonplace. But the point is that the religious philosopher attaches to it a very much higher significance than does the average thinker. It is usually assumed, for instance, that the world can be set right if only a sufficient number of decent people are willing to get on with their jobs in a positive and helpful spirit. Nothing further is asked of us in this respect than that we should take both ourselves and the surrounding world pretty much as we find them and go straight ahead with our tasks—or rather, the tasks assigned to us by the Government.

But this conception is clearly inadequate. Naturally the mass of scientists, engineers, diplomats, teachers and business men at work in the world achieve a great deal in all sorts of directions. If they did not society would simply fall to pieces. But the outcome of it all is an unstable, superficial and distressing system of relations. As always, when the spiritual element is denied the parts are in themselves acceptable, but the principle which should unite them is lacking. For it is only a deeper type of inspiration which can make for true order and coherence.

We cannot neglect in this connection the significance of

dispassion. The view is usually accepted that provided that disputation and polemics are kept within certain limits they are a healthy manifestation, inescapably attending the working out of political problems. It is even held in some quarters that it lies in the very nature of politics that it must be in a large measure a 'dirty game'. This is a human approach to the subject which is acceptable enough on its own plane. But, as I have suggested above, we may to-day have reached a point at which we shall have squarely to face the possibility that we must raise our moral standards or linger indefinitely in a welter of conflicts, emergencies, discomforts and deprivations with no prospect of extricating ourselves from them. If this realisation becomes increasingly acute it will precipitate that separation of the Sheep and the Goats to which I have alluded repeatedly in these pages: an idealistic minority will refuse to compromise any longer and will withdraw from their corrupt surroundings in order to lay the foundations of a different and superior order of society.

How this will work out remains, of course, to be seen. But in any case it is apparent that religion stands for the principle that wisdom is the fruit only of a high degree of interior discipline and purification, far beyond that which is demanded for participating in any 'dirty game'. And it may be suggested that modern psychology is advancing exactly the same teaching. If you are even in a small measure agitated, resentful, impatient, idea-ridden, or fanatical when called upon to deal with a problem, then you betray the existence of disturbances in your deeper consciousness which demand attention before you proceed further.\* Moreover, whatever action you take while so conditioned will have little creative value, for the reason

\* This problem is being taken very seriously by American sociologists, who in their analysis of social and political problems are attaching increasing importance to psychological factors. See in particular Harold D. Lasswell, *The Analysis of Political Behaviour*, 1948.

that it will reflect for the most part your private unresolved conflicts. Yet, act you must.

We have here a criticism which is particularly difficult for the typical modern 'realist' to answer. For if he insists that the keynote of our age is the scientific control of experience, then logically he ought to recognise that the experts in this particular department of science regard most of his political activities as being in a large measure neurotically conditioned! One may observe in passing that psychology has something to say also regarding those pictures of a bright and happy new world which fill the mind of the idealistic reformer. While one band of modern specialists are busy drawing up plans for a New Jerusalem, another, no less up to date, are analysing the structure of such manifestations as the Infantile El Dorado Fantasy and similar attempts to escape from reality into Utopia.

One must recognise, however, that the last word is not with the psychologist. In order to liberate that spiritual dynamic which is essential for really creative action we shall require something beyond the services of the ordinary therapist. For he can usually achieve little beyond the elimination of disturbances in the psyche. Although he may be capable of affording his patients relief, or enabling them to 'return to work', he cannot do much to raise the level of their consciousness. His concern is with that condition of minimal functioning which we today describe as 'normality'.\* The presupposition of creativeness, however, is the production of a higher order of consciousness, involving rebirth 'in the Spirit'. It is a question of substituting for the accepted system of moral and mental discipline another of a different and more searching type, the concentration of the mind upon an entirely different set of facts and problems. Once again our steps are led to the frontier of religion.

\* For a detailed analysis of this problem see *Isis and Osiris*, Part One, Chapter VI.

## 3. BLUE PRINTS AND ROSE SPECTACLES

A final word must be said regarding the relation between planning and individual redemption.

No intelligent person can fail to perceive that planning will have a permanent place in our future economy—for the reason that it represents the affirmation of the complementary principle to *laissez-faire*: an emphasis on the Whole to balance that preoccupation with the part which is responsible for the chaotic and wildly fluctuating conditions resulting from unrestricted private enterprise. But we have also to allow for the fact that, like all new conceptions which magnetize the attention, it will inevitably in its early stages be carried to extremes. And this extravagance (which we are already witnessing in this island) takes the form essentially of bringing into existence by deliberate and unrelenting organization a *simulacrum* of that order which would result from the voluntary dedication of all to a common purpose. Everything is correlated and adjusted from the outside only—with the result that a *façade* is created which has no life and spontaneity behind it. It is the difference between the pattern which *results* from free growth, and that which is merely imposed on a passive substance by external impression; the wills which are active in the enterprise are operating from without instead of from within. And the outcome is mechanical conformity instead of cooperative production.

Further, this abuse of the will results naturally in the expenditure of dynamic power in exactly the opposite direction to that in which it should normally be exercised: i.e., in compelling or persuading the citizen to submit to an abstract system which replaces that to which he ought properly be making a creative and responsible contribution. The planners, in aiming at 'results', find by degrees that they have left out in their calculations the elaborate and

costly bureaucratic organization that is called for in order to establish and maintain from the outside what ought properly to come from the inside. In a word, the fundamental spiritual order is reversed, and the Within subordinated, with disastrous consequences, to the Without. And so it will go on for a long season until our materialistically-minded legislators come slowly to realise the true nature of man's relation to reality.

In considering the activities of the systematic organizer it is important to observe that all such activities as the preparation, discussion and execution of plans exercise a peculiarly deceptive impression upon the mind. The attention is centred upon this or that bright, clean, logical and attractive pattern, which is inevitably presented to one in dangerous disassociation from the total situation of which it forms but a part. Every project is of the order of an affirmation, and as we examine its features we are hypnotized to some degree or other by the limited truth which it embodies. We lose our perspective, and forget that it appears as a struggling little oasis in the midst of a vast jungle of confusion, violence greed and conflict, and that it is representative only of what a handful of idealists are attempting to create in the face of the determined opposition of a world which is still dominated by the values of acquisitiveness and egoism. Moreover, we have to consider as well that if our revolutionaries attempt to impose their projects on that world by arbitrary means, they will only bring into existence a still more desperate type of situation.

The man who finds that he is becoming too fascinated by the designs and visions of the planners will, if he is wise, balance this study by a realistic contemplation of the appalling psychological and spiritual background against which they appear.

The effect should not be discouragement, which is completely unproductive, but sobriety. And he should be

impelled also, if he is intelligent, to recognise that, as I have already remarked above, planning is clearly the most easy and straightforward element in social transformation. It is a purely intellectual undertaking, demanding, it is true, much patience, precision and skill, but not making anything like such serious demands on the individual as are imposed by that moral reformation which is an essential condition of carrying it into effect. This if only because those who are working in this field are all the time manipulating visible, external and comprehensible facts which can be dealt with without calling upon the deeper resources of the intellect and the spirit. The work may often demand great powers of courage and concentration, but it does *not* call for the exploration of that mysterious, threatening and soul-searching realm of being which lies behind and within the sphere in which organization achieves its ends.

But most important of all, we are brought back to the principle that I have already emphasized earlier that all this labour in the objective realms of experience is largely the result of falling away from a more central order of vision. Planning there must be; yet it needs only a small amount of realistic analysis to perceive that the real problem before us is that of changing the character of men's sympathies and responses.

Practically never in this particular field does the intelligence as such break down. The technical problems with which we are presented are usually well within the capacity of the people who are trying to cope with them. And even if things go slightly amiss no really serious damage is done.

A great deal of planning, however, is really only an attempt to compensate, by the creation of an infinity of laborious adaptations and arrangements, for a more searching, and apparently unrewarding, type of work—that of self-discovery, of which practically everybody is terrified. Teach men to know themselves and the rest will follow

automatically; it is not too much to say that ninety per cent of the task will have been completed. For we have to accept the basic mystical principle that every liberated individual finds himself in harmony with every other individual who has also been liberated—however fantastic this notion may appear to the sceptic. The technical outworkings then become a minor consideration. Self-knowledge releases energy, sympathy, idealism, hope, and even intelligence. As the great masters of the spiritual life have always taught, it is the simple and basic key to all the problems which arise when the mind has become dissociated from the heart. Not that it is in any sense a *substitute* for specialized mental activity. But it subordinates such activity completely to itself.

It follows that the only true realists amongst us are not the shapers of projects and plans, but those who are concentrating their energies first and foremost on bringing themselves, and then men generally, into a living association with the Spirit, on concentrating on that from which all else derives.

One of the dangers attending the creation of the Work State, with its dreary promise of 'full employment' for all, is that people will lose sight of the true significance of leisure. More and more do we tend to think of 'relaxation' as a means of building up our physical and psychological resources to enable us to return with new energy to the mechanized occupation which has been allotted to us within the System. Actually, however, such refreshment should have a far more creative function. For it is only by withdrawing from external activities for a short or long season that we can register those deeper creative rhythms which are denied and suppressed in our 'normal' existence. It is in such zones of peace and quiet alone that there disclose themselves those fertilizing liberating ideas by which the life of society is renewed and maintained.

'I loaf and invite my soul', wrote Whitman, while another poet had no misgivings in declaring that he was content to 'stand and stare'. Unless in the days to come the same respect is paid to 'idle' contemplation as is paid to-day to systematization and planning, culture will wither away through lack of vision and inspiration. We may, indeed, have to recognize that the fact that in ancient civilizations no work was done on from a third to a fifth of the days of the year constituted a true cultural achievement. Today, however, we are faced with the threat that the extraverts will dominate the scene and bring into existence a merely external order devoid of all indwelling life.

One must affirm, therefore, that it is essential that in these days of mechanization and bureaucratic standardization a minority at least should repudiate the inferior ideals of 'security' and the pursuit of a 'gainful occupation' and insist with unconcern, or even ostentation, upon merely 'sitting about' in an apparently useless and uncooperative fashion in the midst of all the unproductive agitation which is being fostered around them. There is an important order of insight which will assuredly be vouchsafed only to those who have the courage to refrain from 'playing their part' in creating the sort of world towards which Scientific Humanism is impelling us, and we should be fully awake to the fact. In other words we shall have to reckon with the Higher Spivery.



## *Chapter Five*

# SOCIALISM WITHOUT GOD

PRACTICALLY since the beginning of recorded history men have been living under conditions which entail an extreme degree of social injustice. No government has ever yet devised a system which did away with the difference between the unduly rich and the unduly poor. (And, it may be added, no government as such ever will.) And now in the present century, aided in a large measure by the increasing literacy of the proletariat, the long-delayed 'revolt of the masses' has seriously begun, to the horror and fear of the prosperous and privileged. Capitalism, with its favours and opportunities for a minority, has automatically engendered a protest from the majority, who rightly demand that the balance shall be adjusted and the fruits of production more equally distributed. The 'have-nots' have a justifiable urge to settle their accounts with the 'haves'. The masses reasonably claim that there shall be a more equal share-out, and wider opportunities for all, as opposed to a protected minority, to unfold their latent possibilities.

### I. SOCIALISM AND RELIGION

Such claims have their foundation in the very nature of man. In the soul of every human being there is implanted a hunger for life in ever increasing measure. And this is fundamentally an expression of the fact that man is essentially divine, born to master and enjoy the boundless

resources of Nature. In one sense at least it is profoundly true that each and all of us have 'a right to be happy'. We have been created to express ourselves in freedom and joy. But this only if we are prepared to accept certain conditions which are imposed upon us by the very nature of Reality. And the difficulty is that those people who are so passionately and rightly concerned to open the doors of life to the exploited, the disinherited and the enslaved in almost all cases refuse to face the fact that such conditions exist.

From the spiritual point of view no social reformer can be considered as being truly realistic who has not brought himself to face such questions as the following: Is it possible without resorting to deeper principles to ensure that the leaders of the people will not be corrupted by the tremendous power which has been placed in their hands? Can man safely proceed to refashioning society without at the same time refashioning the individuals of which society is composed? Will education by itself tame the tendencies of the ape and tiger in man? Can we, without turning to a higher Power, find the inspiration we need in dealing with the formidable problems which revolution is bringing into existence? Can men with impunity set their hearts on increased material welfare? Can we secure the benefits of state socialism without imperilling individual freedom? Can we safely place our faith in the power of science to make men happier without an equal and corrective concern with the life of the Spirit? And so on.

The illusions entertained by social reformers respecting such issues are naturally shared by the masses. But they have little responsibility on this account since in the past they have been robbed by the rich, not only of money, but of education as well. The privileged are destined to discover, in fact, that the damage which they have done to the poor on the mental plane will recoil on them far more powerfully

than that for which they are responsible in the sphere of material welfare. They threaten to be destroyed by the blind and violent exponents of the perverse philosophies which are born out of an imposed ignorance.

In other words from the standpoint of a more profound philosophy social reform is being carried forward largely in an atmosphere of phantasy. Whatever successes are immediately achieved on this level, in the end the deeper laws of life will have to be reckoned with and sobriety prevail. Yet at the same time we have to give due recognition to what may be described as the principle of historical necessity. We are concerned with a drama which must be played out in its fulness. The forces set in motion by centuries of cruel oppression and injustice must be worked out, however much it may cost. Whether the lot of humanity in Western Europe will in the main be any better under new tyrannies than it was under the old no wise man will venture to say. What alone is clear is that the really basic issues cannot emerge until the latent tendencies in mankind have been given full expression. Only when the various systems which are being commended to our attention have been thoroughly tried out will the more radical solutions present themselves. Men today have lost faith in the ecclesiastical control of society, in the principles of *laissez faire* and enlightened self-interest. Perhaps when they have also explored the possibilities of secular socialism they may be ready to adopt a spiritual system of government based upon the deeper realities of life.

## 2. COMMUNISM AND THE PERSON

Where, then, does secular socialism break down? In discussing this question I shall begin by making a few observations on Marxian Communism, and then in the next

chapter pass on to examine certain features which practically all forms of socialism\* have in common.

The first and obvious reason why Communism is unacceptable to the religious thinker is that it is based upon the principles of Dialectic Materialism, a system of thought which has its place amongst those dismal philosophies which attempt to explain life from below upwards. As such it can only maintain itself by suppressing at every point any evidence in favour of the fact that man lives in a wider world than that of physical matter and its psychic reflexes. I will make no attempt here to discuss the doctrine here and remark only that the prospects for its triumph in any part of the world where free discussion is still possible are definitely limited. For whatever 'dialectical' transformations it may have undergone in the resourceful hands of modern Russian theorists, it is essentially bound up with a nineteenth-century conception of physics which has been undermined by subsequent research. Further, it is threatened from another angle by the steady progress which is being made in our modern investigation of the great world of the Unseen. But I will say nothing further on this question here, as I have dealt with it at some length elsewhere.

Naturally, since Marxism failed to recognise the reality of the spiritual factors in existence it is bound to lower the status of the person, denying him any distinctively metaphysical significance. The theory is that the purposes of the individual must be subordinated to those of the State. The myth is created that the minority who originally seized power in the name of the people are actually still representing its collective will, whereas in reality they are palpably forcing their aims upon them. This dictatorship first of all severely limits creativeness in relation to the life of the

\* Communism is actually, in spite of its title, a form of socialism, since the system is at present, according to its theorists, passing through that preliminary socialistic phase provided for by Marxian theory as a prelude to the final stage of full Communism.

nation; the individual is tolerated only insofar as he contributes to the purposes of the State in rigidly conceived terms. Further, it naturally precludes him completely from any activity directed against the State, such as conscientious objection to war or the maintenance of an opposition, and thus kills at the root any inspiration which may arise in men's hearts to serve wider purposes and more ultimate ends. All faith is lost in the power of individuals to attain to a higher order of vision than that on which their rulers are working; everything that threatens the existing order is condemned in advance.

It follows naturally that communistic theory is fundamentally antagonistic to the principle of regionalism. In every country there are groups of communists at work who are planning and scheming, not primarily in the light of the situation which is defining itself within its frontiers, but in accordance with rigid principles which are propagated from their Headquarters in Moscow. This automatically isolates them from the body of the nation, and accounts, one imagines, for a great deal in their psychology. Their fundamental allegiance is outside their fatherland, and an interior conflict inevitably results. It means also that they are precluded from contributing to those creative processes which are spontaneously and unpredictably liberated within the people, and which in the present epoch may prove to be of the greatest significance for the transformation of our modern society.

Admittedly totalitarianism gets 'results', and this in the most striking fashion. This naturally follows, firstly from the tremendous liberation of energy on a low level which results from the acceptance of a fanatical ideology, and secondly from the simplification of the ends which the State sets out to realise. But the achievements which result are devoid of any deep spiritual significance, for the reason that they do not represent the united expression of

a collection of freely acting wills, but the results of a process of standardization which has been imposed from above.

Since the individual is denied participation in any wider spiritual system, the communist has no compunction in 'liquidating' him if he in any way opposes his purposes. The use of force is justified on the grounds that a group who are represented as embodying the realities of the historical process are simply eliminating personalities who have failed to conform to them. The fact that a particular party has acceded to power is taken to mean quite simply that it is embodying the purposes of a triumphant Life Force. Its ability to realise its ends is interpreted as an indication that those ends are just and right.

This the religious thinker cannot, of course, allow. For he is committed to the view that the human individual differs from all other biological forms of life in being essentially divine—a term to which he gives a precise meaning—and that he must therefore be treated as an end in himself. Quite apart, however, from the theological aspect of the question, it should be plain that resort to force undermines the whole foundation of civilization. Everything that is precious and creative in life is the outcome of free consent, judgment and cooperation; when they are suppressed the cultural level automatically falls to a serious degree. It is for this reason that we in the Occident hold on so tenaciously to our powerful, although seriously threatened heritage of freedom—that heritage which is implied, for instance, in the publication of this book.

Between the situation of the populations of Western Europe (in so far as the Western Europe of tradition may still be said to persist) on the one hand and those of the Russian-dominated territory on the other there is this fundamental difference: west of the Elbe it is still possible for a minority to think other than in secret for itself; east of the Elbe it is not. To put it differently, however corrupt the

system under which we are living in the West, certain rights and freedoms are still preserved which are essential to man's spiritual development. Economically the masses may be at the mercy of the few. They may have little voice in the real direction of affairs. They may be overworked to the point of having scarcely any leisure for exercising their free judgment. That judgment may in any case be corrupted by the influence of inferior literature and amusements. But however hard pressed they may be, they still enjoy liberties which in the spiritual order far outweigh the material advantages of which they are deprived. Those who have the inclination and opportunity to do so can still discuss, compare, evaluate, hear (if they take the trouble to) all sides.

The majority of those who still exercise their faculties in this direction freely may, it is true, have little power to change the external conditions to which they are subjected; the economic system has them largely in its grip. Nevertheless, they are inwardly free. Nothing can disguise the fact that from the *spiritual* standpoint political is infinitely more important than economic freedom, for it relates to the more real and interior aspect of experience. Material limitations—unless they positively destroy the personality—may produce extreme unhappiness, but they do not violate our human dignity to the degree that it is violated by proscriptions upon the free exercise of thought. For man is essentially a being whose privilege and responsibility it is to judge, and if that is taken away from him the divine imprint upon his soul is effaced, his central stronghold assailed.

The political expression of this principle is a democratic regime, based theoretically upon consultation and consent. However imperfectly it works, the more crude and violent forms of coercion are excluded. Moreover, it provides for the possibility that a minority at present out of power may later have an opportunity of instituting a better system.

A totalitarian regime, on the contrary, cannot but make for an appalling degree of sterility and uniformity. Thought may unfold and expand—but only until it impinges upon strict limits imposed by authority beforehand. Since there is a constant danger of disaffection, all intellectual manifestations have to be carefully controlled and coordinated. Further, since even the most rigid regime must adapt itself to circumstances, the whole weight of official support has to be thrown behind a series of discontinuous measures—which makes, of course, for a constant condition of uncertainty and anxiety on the part of the citizen regarding his orthodoxy. In spite of a surface effect of animation and energy, the result is spiritual stagnation and paralysis, external order conjoined with internal impoverishment. Every type of intellectual and artistic quest is pursued—but only until those engrossed in it find themselves confronted by an iron frontier which permits of no further advance. Nor are such frontiers very distant either from the point from which thought takes its departure.

With respect to Russia, the poverty of Soviet culture is not at first obviously apparent.\* It is notoriously more difficult to recognise what is discreetly left out in a presentation than what is blatantly introduced into it from without. Soviet art and literature present us with a continuous façade in which no gaps are permitted to appear. Only after studying its vigorous—and in their order creative—manifestations for some time does the observer begin to realise the full extent of what is *not* referred to, *not* discussed, *not* presupposed. He then appreciates how extensively spiritual ideas—quite apart from the explicit discussion of religious and idealist principles—still per-

\* I ought to remark, perhaps, that I base these conclusions on a study of original Russian material. It is often just those manifestations which present the least literary interest, and are therefore not selected for translation, which most decisively reveal the prevailing spirit of a culture.



meate and inform our western cultural attitude, and what an impoverishment results from the ruthless suppression of all non-Marxian manifestations.

Of course a great deal of our own cultural material is no more than dead matter, bearing little relation to the distinctive problems which confront us in the present epoch. Nevertheless, in so far as the spiritual is affirmed and recognized in any form it maintains an essential relationship between man and the Within and so preserves him from descending to the materialistic plane.

The depth of our resistance to totalitarianism is measured by our appreciation of what is implied in the philosophy of freedom. Freedom means essentially the right of each individual to make his own unique and spontaneous contribution to the common good. As there is a universal element in his nature he will be moved, if he is in a proper state of mind, not towards isolation and separatism, but towards cooperation with others. Yet in so doing he will give expression to his distinctive capacities, insights and sympathies.

Since, however, the range of human types is extremely wide it follows that no narrow conception of the common good can possibly claim to represent a true synthesis of their manifold and diversified aims. And this by itself reveals the futility of attempting to impose upon a nation either a single political party or one distinctive type of philosophy, such as materialism.

Further, it is no less certain that no living impulse which appears within an individual or class of individuals can ever be dealt with by the process of suppression, either by the person himself, or by others. Sooner or later all tendencies must come into expression and play their part in shaping the general character of the whole. Whether when that time comes they prove to be creative or destructive, in either case their nature becomes apparent only when they have

been given freedom to manifest.\* And again they can only be properly evaluated by society when they have been either rejected or accepted by people in complete liberty. All this only represents the application to the community of principles which have now been fully accepted by psychologists and educators in respect to the problems of personal life. Suppression solves nothing; true creation begins only at the point at which the individual either makes a spontaneous and acceptable contribution to society, or equally freely brings his erroneous ideas into relation with reality.

To consider suppression in its most extreme form, we have already noted that the communist is prepared, not only to exercise control over people's mental life, but to go to the length if need be of destroying them physically if they stand in his path. It is plain that this brings with it no real solution. Further, one may suggest that we can even gain a glimpse of the mechanism by which such violence recoils upon itself. For not only does religion teach that one must love both one's friends and one's enemies; it also stands for a belief in another and a more extensive world than that of the physical. It follows that the device of 'liquidating' one's enemies by destroying them is a long way from solving the problem of dealing with them. If the end of the physical body is not the end of the soul, then the victims of totalitarianism have been merely displaced to another sphere.

Moreover, that sphere is not by any means remote from that from which they have been forcibly exiled, and from it, the esotericist asserts, they can exert revengeful influences of a very powerful type. This idea is, of course, not considered seriously by orthodox religious thinkers, but it is familiar enough to students of spiritual science and I com-

\* Within those limits, of course, which even in an enlightened society have to be imposed for the preservation of social order. We cannot dispense with the police. Yet at the same time the genuinely religious will ever seek to reduce coercion to an absolute minimum.

mend it here in passing to any readers who may have a more imaginative conception of man's relation to the Unseen. Action and reaction are equal; and only the utterly materialistic will believe that there are no psychic repercussions to the process of 'liquidation'. And naturally the destruction of human beings in the course of war has the same implications.

### 3. THE SOVIET EXPERIMENT

As to the tremendous social experiment which is now being carried out in Russia, its fantastic character lies in the fact that it is devoted to imposing by force a regime which in many respects represents an advance upon the obviously outmoded system of capital democracy. Something new and vital is coming to birth—under the shadow of death. The dynamic conception of community organization is being worked out in such a way as to suppress its most vital component, the freedom of the individual. What significance the system has for the future no man can say. Only time can reveal its import.

One thing at least is plain. Since this vast and disturbing enterprise is being conducted in isolation from the rest of the world it entails inescapably a cultural impoverishment. Every communist government is committed by its principles to overthrowing all other types of government. Hence it is automatically compelled to represent all other states as its enemies and prevent its citizens at all costs from discovering the truth about them. Worse still, it is bound to incite them to hate the representatives of alternative forms of civilization. These developments follow with an irresistible logic from the philosophy on which its policy is based.

Within the country itself the outcome can only be the tyranny of the Police State, as is now plain to the whole

world. And this for citizens of western countries must signify disaster. For Russia also it is a tragedy. Yet due account must be taken of the character and history of that strange land. I would venture to suggest that, as far as our limited knowledge of the situation enables us to judge, Marxist-Leninist Communism may in certain respects be a beneficial regime for the Russian people in their present stage of development.

There can be little doubt that the Soviets are experimenting with certain forms of social association and activity which are of great importance for the future of civilization. That they are doing so in their own peculiar terms does not do away with the importance of their investigations. In however strange a fashion, the problems of a new type of social structure are being attacked, and in many respects solved. The fact that all these developments are taking place within the rigid limits imposed by a Police State does not, for the imaginative thinker, deprive them of significance. And it is plain that they are congenial to the Russian soul.

Further, it would seem to work out that at the point they have now reached the scope given to millions of Russians to develop their capacities and expand their minds by submitting to every conceivable type of practical training considerably outweighs in significance the fact that they are achieving all these things within the framework of a rigid system of government control.

What that system at present provides is abundant opportunities for the first stages of mental growth, plus a carefully formulated mythology to furnish inspiration for work and effort. And from this point of view it can scarcely be deemed to be an instrument of oppression. For since only a small minority at present are aware of the limited nature of the system in relation to wider possibilities, what it provides for them, relative to their past, is not restriction

but opportunity. After all, if we make the reasonable assumption that two elements are demanded in order to bring about a new order in Russia—political freedom and abundant provision for the extension of elementary education, technical training and social organization—there seems to be no particular reason why one should not be developed considerably in advance of the other.

With all this, however, it is no less plain that once this more elementary phase of experience is completed and the education with which the masses are being so lavishly provided begins to make—as it is bound to do sooner or later—for intelligent criticism of the system itself, then the door will be open to trouble of the most serious order. It lies in the nature of thought that it has infinite potentialities, and in this case nothing in the world can prevent it ultimately from submitting to criticism the system which originally started it off on its course. To assume that speculation can be exercised freely up to certain limits and beyond them be kept in restraint is to indulge in pure phantasy.

Another aspect of the problem which must be fairly faced is the significance of Atheism. Although religion is formally tolerated in Russia today the whole character of Soviet life is being shaped and formed, as everyone knows, by people who have embraced a philosophy which is avowedly irreligious. This development may have been extremely salutary from the point of view of breaking down the influence of a Church which was in many respects notoriously corrupt. But we have to ask whether any culture is likely to prosper indefinitely if it makes no provision for man's association with a higher Power.

Without some reference to absolute values there is no guarantee of morality. Today in the West this acknowledgment is at least maintained in an attenuated form in our respect for liberal principles. That is to say, we still honour

certain diplomatic conventions, shrink from violating our pledges, seek to safeguard the rights of individuals and nations. Such an attitude is, as I have suggested earlier, implicitly religious.

But once a body of people have repudiated ultimate standards, and align themselves with nothing more ultimate than social tendencies—claiming, for instance, that their actions represent ‘the will of the people’—there is nothing in heaven or earth to prevent them from resorting to any means they think fit to realise their ends. No room is left for mercy or justice to opponents, since no principle is recognised that subordinates power-seeking to a higher law than itself. Only the naïve are disconcerted at the lying, violence and cruelty which we have come to associate with Communism; they fail to perceive that they derive directly from the assumptions of an atheistic philosophy.

*Chapter Six*  
SCIENCE AND SOCIETY

I HAVE taken the view in the present study that the philosophy which provides the central inspiration for our contemporary attempt to build up a new socialistic order can most accurately be described as Scientific Humanism. The term 'Humanism' must, of course, like all designations of this type, be treated with due caution. For the words which we use in this field have undergone so many changes and been so seriously abused that it would indeed be a relief if we could drop them all and start all over again on a new basis.

Let us take note of the fact, therefore, that Humanism may stand for the philosophical pragmatism of the late Dr. F. C. S. Schiller, for a form of religion in which the relation to God is reduced to a minimum, for the revival of learning at the Renaissance, for the Worship of Humanity instituted by Compté, for the cultivation of the Humanities, and finally for an emphasis on the essentially human ideas of discipline, service, integrity, sympathy, the dignity of labour, and the like.

It is in this last sense, which is practically indistinguishable from Humanitarianism, that I am using the term here. And I preface it with the adjective 'scientific' because it is plain that our modern humanism is being developed in an atmosphere which is heavily impregnated with science. Scientific Humanism is, of course, today an accepted conception. I have no objection to the principles for which it stands except in so far as they do inadequate justice to

certain deeper religious realisations. In what follows I want to examine their bearing upon the problem of social reconstruction from this point of view.

### 1. SCIENCE AND MAN

No imaginative person can fail to be deeply stirred by the tremendous achievements of modern science. It is not only a question of a magnificent extension of the field of our knowledge, but of the introduction into our mental life of ways of thinking which are clearly destined to modify enormously—and on the whole in the direction of good—our traditional attitude to experience. One need only emphasize here the tendency which science brings with it towards dispassion, objectivity and universality. Thanks to its exact and self-possessed operations a whole mass of problems which were previously dealt with in an atmosphere of superstition, prejudice and obscurantism are being brought into the clear light of day and for the first time examined on their merits.

Yet with all this there is another side to the picture. Although the scientific method is perfectly applicable in a certain field, there is a constant danger of its being employed illegitimately in other realms. That is to say, we find scientific thinkers either failing to recognise the importance of aspects of experience with which their specialized training has made them unfamiliar, or, still worse, attempting to control and interpret them in terms of narrowly scientific conceptions and theories instead of in terms of those which are really appropriate to them. As examples of this tendency I would instance: the development by scientist-philosophers of systems which reduce life to the level of mechanism and biology and make no provision for the realm of spirit; attempts to deal 'scientifically' with aspects of human psychology—e.g., mysticism—which can



be rendered intelligible only by the use of other concepts; a deep-seated resistance to the world of the psychic and the Unseen; a general tendency to exalt *l'esprit géométrique* above *l'esprit de finesse*.\*

In respect of human beings the average scientist proceeds on the assumption that science has developed methods of investigation which can be automatically extended from the realm of physics, where they are ideally applicable, through that of biology right up to that of human experience in its most intimate mode. But this is obviously a tremendous assumption which every intelligent person will treat with the greatest reserve. For it should surely be evident that a technique evolved to deal with objects in their most mechanical aspects cannot but progressively decrease in efficiency as we move into a field in which mechanism is at its minimum.

Admittedly science can aid us greatly in dealing with the more external elements in our human experience. But to the degree that we become concerned with the inner realm of life, creativeness and personality, its control over the situation cannot but diminish. To understand men and women in any deep sense we have to shift our viewpoint from the scientific to what I can only describe as the mystical angle. This means in effect that we have to approach the

\* One of the most disturbing manifestations of this narrowly scientific approach to experience is the insensitiveness of scientific agriculturalists to the deeper rhythms of nature. Their tendency is to aim directly at immediate, tangible and superficially profitable results at the cost of causing disorder and dislocation on a more profound level. This is expressed in such things as the abuse of artificial fertilizers, artificial insemination, the inoculation of virgin heifers so as to obtain milk without impregnation or calf bearing (milk the consumption of which makes for precocious sexuality in children), the battery production of eggs (with the result that the birds die and the chicks peck their own and each other's flesh), and the like. For an account of these developments see E. L. Grant Watson, *But to What Purpose*, 1946, Ch. XXXII, "Nature and Artifice". He wisely remarks that "to understand Nature we must make our contemplation of the observed object a creative act of imagination" (p. 216).

whole problem from the *opposite* direction to that in which it is approached by science. For science gains understanding by dispassionately examining things *from the outside*, by what is technically known as the study of phenomena. The essence of spiritual knowledge, on the contrary, lies in interpretation *from the inside*, the exactly complementary angle. In other words, to understand in this more interior and central sense you must penetrate into that which is before you by a process of imaginative identification, of intuitive projection. Whereas scientific understanding results essentially from standing back, from remaining external to the object, understanding which is of the Spirit results from fusing oneself with it—as every artist and mystic knows.

Of course there are multitudes of scientifically-minded people who seek to express a genuine love of humanity by studying them from a technical angle, but this does not alter the fact that what they thus learn is not fundamental and that they have yet to become aware of the conditions of a deeper order of apprehension. They are seeking to solve the problems before them in too easy a fashion. And this explains the deep resistance on the part of sensitive people to being examined for scientific purposes; they know intuitively that they are being subjected to an inappropriate technique.

Again, with respect to the intellectual aspect of the question the fact emerges that in order to solve the problems which meet us in the sociological field we are compelled to think in categories with which the man of science is unfamiliar, and which baffle his understanding. This is revealed clearly enough in the realm of 'depth psychology', the technique of which demands something far beyond mere scientific competence. As every enlightened psychotherapist today recognises, we cannot gain any grasp of the processes at work in the recesses of the human soul with-

out making use of symbols, conceptions and images which are drawn from non-scientific fields of knowledge. All of which leads us irresistibly to the conclusion that the key to all deeper insight into human behaviour is not technical proficiency, but simply love. If we wish to penetrate to the more profound aspect of the problem we must put our trust, not in the head, but in the heart.

What it comes to is that we are here concerned with a type of interest in the universe which, unless it is corrected by an equally powerful concern with experience of a widely different order in the sphere of art, psychology, and particularly religion, can have a most serious effect in warping and limiting the mind. To put it plainly, the tendency of the laboratory is to turn out highly trained, but uncultivated personalities—as we are today finding to our cost.

Let me make my meaning quite plain. We can distinguish two broad aspects of culture. There is first of all that knowledge of man's behaviour which is possessed by the scholar, the art expert, the archaeologist, the learned humanist. In many directions it presents much interest and charm. But at the same time we have to recognise that a great deal of it is trivial and futile, and of little significance for the present epoch, serving only to provide employment for pedants, dilettantes and sterile academic personalities. Its acquisition and circulation is also closely associated with a bourgeois type of civilization in which effete minds compensate for their lack of vitality by a snobbish and parasitic concern with the productions of more virile epochs. The rich capitalist whose house is filled with art treasures and yet whose failure in human standards is expressed by the ignoble function which he is content to assume in society provides an expressive enough symbol of what 'culture' can signify on this level.

In sharp contrast to this decadence we have culture in the sense of a healthy exploration of man's higher nature and

its different expressions, conducted before everything in relation to our living and immediate problems. Here it is a question of discovering the needs and capacities of men and women at their loftiest and best, and what such needs mean when translated into social terms. The problem is that of understanding all the different 'worlds' into which the mind of man can enter—the realms of science, art, politics, philosophy and religion—and attempting to comprehend their nature and mutual relations. In this enterprise such disciplines as scholarship and criticism will, of course, play an important part. But the essential fact is that attention must be concentrated *first* on broad, basic issues.

From the point of view of building up a new society it is obviously more important to understand, say, the different techniques for preserving calm and steadiness of mind than the niceties of the art of the Quattrocento. In a word, our humanism must be realistic in spirit.

It is difficult to deny, however, that 'scientific interest' in humanity, when too narrowly pursued, makes for the neglect of those wider elements in our experience. It ensures, admittedly, a high degree of control over the external aspects of life—food, housing, transport, communications. But at the same time it leaves all manner of more interior problems untouched, and therefore cannot by itself afford a solution to our difficulties.

Here one must insist on the fact that, relatively speaking, science is an *easy* activity. By this I mean that although it involves technical operations of the most complicated, and to the layman alarming, order they are all accomplished within the framework of a very restricted system of ideas, the general character of which is comprehensible to every intelligent person. To put it quite simply, although the outsider may not undersand *how* scientists achieve their ends, he has a pretty clear understanding of what they are

trying to do. And he knows also that a limited range of faculties are required for the purpose.

The converse, however, is not true. The man of science has not the same passport into that realm of personality, values, poetic and mystical realisations in which his colleagues are working. He only too often, in fact, either tends to dismiss their activities as unrealistic as belonging to the world of 'private feelings', or at least finds it very difficult to understand the experience with which they are dealing. This for the reason that in order to move therein freely it is essential to develop elements of consciousness which are not fostered by a purely scientific training. In a word, it is more easy to pass from the Within to the Without than in the reverse direction.

The significance of all this for the future is plain enough. Everything depends upon how far our men of science—including the widespread class of the scientifically-minded—who are at present excusably enough almost overpowered by the extent of their achievements in the technical realm—are really prepared to show due deference to the work of their colleagues who are investigating the human situation in other fields. The prospects, it must be admitted, do not at present appear to be very encouraging. Practically all the scientists who took part in the B.B.C. discussion early in 1946 on 'The Crisis of our Time' betrayed, as Professor A. D. Ritchie pointed out in summing it up,\* a markedly naïve attitude towards problems which other specialists in the realms of ethics, psychology and religion are dealing with on a far deeper level.

To accuse our contemporary scientists of being 'half-baked' would be going much too far. But it is permissible, I submit, to say that they lack the capacity to see their own particular speciality in relation to the wider background of the total human situation. They are insufficiently sensitive

\* *The Listener*, 23.5.46.

to the limitations of their own knowledge and the character of that possessed by others. From this point of view Dr. C. H. Waddington, one of those who contributed to the series, appears as an encouraging exception to the rule. Although, as I shall venture to suggest later, he betrayed in his address the characteristic over-confidence of the modern scientist, he did at least make the statement that 'we want scientists and humanists together, to consider in detail what kind of enrichments of the human personality modern technique could make possible; and then we must decide what kind of social organization will assist in bringing them about.'\*

The creative possibilities of this attitude are too obvious to demand emphasis. But it will evidently be a long time before they are fully appreciated. For although there is a good deal of evidence that the resistance on the part of sensitive people to unimaginative planning is slowly increasing, we can scarcely expect that it will have any serious deterrent effect on our scientific humanists. For what is really involved is a protest by the feminine against the masculine component in consciousness. And such demonstrations are notoriously liable to be weak, uncertain, wistful, nostalgic, unorganised or pathetic.

Thus in the same series Mr. E. M. Forster offered some comments on the subject of planning.† With delightful diffidence he presented himself as an individualistic liberal of the old school who was frankly bewildered by the problems which it raised, and had no positive solution to offer his hearers. But it is to be noted that his uncertainty sprang directly from the wider range of his perceptions. He pointed out that he was an artist, and conveyed to them the disturbing impression which so many elements in planning made upon his mind. His criticisms were, to my mind,

\* *The Listener*, 16.5.46.

† *The Listener*, 11.4.46.

important. But they were advanced with such delicacy and whimsicality that one can be practically certain that they will have a negligible effect upon the tough-minded devotees of forcible standardization, who will assuredly dismiss them as sentimental and irrelevant.

Yet they will be wrong. Rationalism—against which Mr. Forster had conducted in his own refined terms a determined campaign for most of his life—will in this field pursue its triumphal course. But the mystics amongst us at least are convinced that its successes will not be enduring. For however long the drama takes to unfold, wisdom, which involves a more extensive response to experience, cannot but establish its sweet and peaceful empire in the end.

It must be emphasized that emotional reaction of this order constitutes a direct and unintellectualized response to facts which, although they lie beneath that surface which is manipulated by the technical experts, are real and objective in character. In other words, in order to see this problem in its proper perspective we must consider what exactly these impressionable personalities are sensitive to. The answer can only be: to the laws, processes and rhythms in life which underlie and condition those which can be controlled on the scientific plane. In other words, with our more 'feminine' faculties we register, quite definitely and decisively, the presence of deeper elements in the complex which it is essential to respect if we wish to lay a firm foundation for society. Admittedly those who display this sensitiveness are only rarely capable of perceiving and explaining what exactly they are reacting to, for such analysis is the speciality of a different type of mind. Often all they know is that a particular manifestation attracts, revolts, puzzles or depresses them. But none the less they are accurately registering certain factors in the equation which the rationalist cannot afford to ignore.

## 2. SCIENCE AS THE FAIRY GODMOTHER

The first point to be noted with respect to scientific planning is that, as has been more than once pointed out, it has no necessary connection with altruism. The two components of 'Scientific Humanism' are not naturally integrated. There is a vague assumption in many minds that concern with technology impels one automatically towards righteousness, but the plain fact is that between scientific thinking and humanitarian sympathies there is no essential and necessary connection. Science, strictly conceived, is the disinterested study of phenomena. From the scientific standpoint the effects produced on the human organism by a balanced diet and those produced by a virulent type of poison gas are of equal technical interest; in both cases it is a question of studying 'behaviour'. Moreover, the very fact that science is concerned only with general laws and not with individuals or persons renders its attitude in one sense powerfully anti-human; it has absolutely no *direct* point of contact with you and me. While the history of Nazism has shown us unmistakably that science is no less efficient in diabolical than in beneficent hands—in fact, since all human considerations are then sacrificed, even more efficient.\*

Actually the majority of men of science are notably human in their sympathies. As a class they are commendably anxious to play a serious part in the re-shaping of society. They are so constituted that they cannot dissociate their scientific interest in the universe from their impulse to improve the conditions in which men live. (In the same way scientists cannot resist the powerful emotions aroused in them by the picture of the cosmos which they are

\* It lies in the very nature of the scientific technique that it can become an instrument of immense power in the hands of any centralized government. For an able discussion of this disturbing element in our modern civilization see Aldous Huxley, *Science, Liberty and Peace*, 1947.



collectively engaged in building up, and which provides the inspiration for what is known as 'the religion of science'.) But with all this we have to distinguish clearly between what they would *like* to do, and what they actually *can* do. For science can minister to the purposes of humanitarianism only in a limited fashion: by satisfying our bodily and material wants. For the closer it draws to the citadel of the human spirit, the less equipped is it to control the situation. The farther it moves from the realm of the mechanical and external, the more rapidly its grip on experience diminishes.

Thus in a recent broadcast\* Dr. C. H. Waddington spoke of the possibility of measuring ethical standards by their effects on behaviour. This approach is comprehensible enough. For the method of science is to test hypotheses by factual observation. And for the scientist a sublime intuition respecting the rightness of a particular act is merely of the order of a not yet verified theory. Here we become involved with two contrasting approaches to reality, one subjective, the other objective, which have found expression throughout the whole history of human thought. Students of ethics are familiar with an ancient and largely unproductive dispute as to whether God wills a thing because it is good, or it is good because He wills it. In its modern form this controversy resolves itself into a divergence of opinion between the scientifically-minded for whom the conception of God has usually little significance, and who are disposed to measure performance by objective results, and the religious who regard morality as being primarily a matter of following a divine inspiration, or doing the Will of God.

It should be clear, however, that we are concerned in this matter, not with true alternatives, but with a difference in emphasis. On the one hand devotion to God, when it is

\* *The Listener*, 16.5.46.

pure, cannot but make for observable results in the form of goodness, order and harmony. On the other nobody with any serious feeling for metaphysical realities can fail to perceive that such manifestations must have their origin in a higher Power. Yet at the same time one must insist that those who relate themselves first and foremost to the Invisible are working on a deeper level than are thinkers who are unable to rise above the plane of the phenomenal. For since Reality is within, it is safer to concentrate on that which ensures the appearance of desirable elements in life than on those elements themselves.

There is a further important point to be considered. It may superficially seem practicable to determine by scientific investigation whether certain ethical standards 'work'. But a little reflection will show that such 'standards' represent only intellectual formulations which constitute, as it were, the precipitations of a variety of subtle inner states which themselves escape scientific analysis. The scientist who embarked on this investigation would really be committed to the almost impossible task of relating fairly easily identifiable objective facts with the elusive data of poetic and mystical experience.

But, we must now ask, how extensive is the capacity of science to aid us, even in those fields in which it is unquestionably supreme? We must treat with caution, I suggest, the notion that science can wield an enormous power in the control over human affairs. 'The methods of organised research and development,' observed Professor J. D. Bernal in a broadcast in the series already alluded to,\* 'which have grown over many years and were tried out and perfected during the war, have put in our hands powers which are literally unlimited.' Is this actually correct? Of course they are 'unlimited' in the sense that there are no *technical* reasons why enormous changes should not be made in our

\* *The Listener*, 4.4.46.

material and social situation by the application of scientific knowledge. But all this relates almost entirely to the utilitarian plane. Radio, artificial sunlight, scientifically designed dwellings, automobiles, television—such inventions minister essentially to activities higher than themselves. They belong more to the realm of means than to that of ends. The more significant activities of man begin only when the experts in this field have completed their work. And this is implicitly recognised by Professor Bernal himself when he speaks in the same address of the work of science in ‘securing the conditions for a good life for all the people of the world’ and ‘for the realisation of human possibilities’. In other words the power of applied science is expressed principally in providing a basis for more ultimate activities.

This, however, is not the end of the matter. For we have to consider the very important fact that even the realisation of more material ends—huge industrial and agricultural schemes, transfers of population and the like—depends directly and intimately upon the capacity and good will of human beings, upon our ability to harmonize all the myriad competing interests which are active in the world today. In other words we become involved with the influences of art, religion and nationality, of political parties and schools, with the subtle, powerful and incalculable contributions to life by women, and even—though few today would accept the fact—with the operation of strange forces at work in the more interior realms of being.

And this means inescapably that however much control science may exercise over the more material and measurable elements in the equation—locomotives, raw materials, instruments, chemical preparations—it is completely dependent in this matter upon the skill and experience of thinkers of a widely different type: diplomats, artists, seers, intuitive psychologists, philosophers and mystics, to whom falls the

actual task of translating the situation into human terms, of controlling the forces on which all progress in the material realm ultimately depends. And the immensity of this undertaking is sufficiently indicated by the appalling state of chaos which prevails in human affairs today all over the world. There can be no doubt that it is only the simplest problems which can be solved in our laboratories. Once again we are confronted with the fact which has met us repeatedly throughout this enquiry that it is the subjective and not the objective elements in experience which present the deeper problems and provide the key to all the others.

"Science," observes Bertrand Russell, "has developed a method of controlled observation interpreted by careful reasoning which, *where it is applicable*, has led to general agreement among competent people."\* This is sound enough. But it is important to realise the full force of the qualifying clause which I have italicized. The plain fact is that directly we cease to concern ourselves with the relatively simple problems which can be dealt with by the application of the scientific method we are dependent upon the exercise of faculties of a far more refined order, the perfection of which is closely associated with the development of the moral and emotional nature.

Of course there are numbers of scientists who cherish the illusion that the technique of science can be extended mechanically to include this more subtle realm of experience. But we have already considered the limitations of this view. And we have seen also that there are some men of science, like Dr. Waddington, who take a more sober view of the situation.

\* *The Listener*, 16.1.47.

### 3. PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

Another question that calls for careful attention is the relation between individual and collective activity. Science makes inevitably for abstract thinking. Hence we find that scientists as a class have a strong disposition to consider our human problems before everything in general terms. In respect to social enterprises their minds are attuned to wide and impersonal aims. To quote again from Professor Haldane, 'as a result of our technical achievements, collective morality has become more important than individual morality, as Professor Bernal said.' And he proceeds to illustrate this thesis by indicating the difference between sporadic and unregulated private contributions to averting a famine and large-scale organised relief. But this evidently misses the deeper element in the problem. Obviously there are all sorts of social situations which can be dealt with effectively only in such terms; we can all see that. But the point is that the carrying out even of such collective enterprises implies the moral behaviour of each person who is associated with it—not to mention that of those who might be opposed to its being carried out.

'Blind forces' and 'social tendencies' are merely convenient abstractions which represent the outcome of a mass of individual responses, choices and adaptations which are in action, so to speak, behind the scenes. All statistics, schemes and plotted distributions imply the solution of a host of intensely personal and 'private' problems out of sight of the planners and administrators. And only at that level is the situation really determined.

On the other hand we do certainly have to recognise that traditional Christian morality appears to have worked out the problem in too narrowly personal terms. Such qualities as forgiveness, charity and patience were cultivated primarily in relation to other individuals, as opposed to

communities and groups. Here I remark only that although we are concerned in this matter with a wider order of responsibility the root of the problem is still to be sought in the secret, subjective life of each individual. There can be no abstractions in the ethical realm.

There is another aspect of the relation between the personal and the collective elements in social life which demands careful attention. In the course of the last few decades enormous advances have been made in the scientific treatment of the human organism. Medical attention, dietetics, psychological adjustment, education, housing, labour conditions—all these matters are now in the hands of an army of highly trained technical experts whose grasp of these complicated problems is becoming ever more complete. Yet with all this one cannot but be aware of a subtle atmosphere of uncertainty and disappointment which hangs over the whole scene. The results which are attained are undeniably impressive, but something indefinable appears to be lacking, something which would, as it were, crown the whole structure and cause all these manifold activities to fall into their rightful place.

The essence of the matter would seem to be that in spite of all the range and complexity of its operations in this realm science somehow fails to touch the innermost springs of creative life. The outcome of its technique as applied in the anthropological field seems likely, one fears, to result in the production of a race of expertly sterilized, conditioned and adjusted beings who, in spite of the carefully regulated character of their functioning, remain untouched by that inner fire which alone can awaken true inspiration, glory and power. Science, in fact, in spite of its ingenuity in rendering men and women adequate to the more prosaic demands of their environment, can do little or nothing to bring them into association with those forces which transform and irradiate the personality and initiate it into the

deeper meanings of life. It can, to some degree, ensure that the mass of the population shall be sufficiently clean, healthy, efficient and psychologically normalized to fulfil the demands of ordinary citizenship, but it cannot raise the processes of their consciousness to a high level. It can increase the vital possibilities for a host of relatively undistinguished individuals, but it cannot release the more lofty powers of the spirit.\* As I have remarked earlier, even 'depth psychology' can for the most part do no more than bring the disturbed organism into a state of readjustment; it cannot do much more than make the sick man 'himself again'.

We are faced, then, with the disconcerting possibility that all that science, in spite of its enormous resources, can do in this field is to make the world increasingly safe for mediocrity by providing it with a carefully designed apparatus for dealing with the less elevated aspects of life. And even here it is doubtful whether the efforts of the technicians will really achieve their object. We have

\* Although it may seem to be inexcusably ungenerous to criticize such a splendid venture as the Peckham Experiment, one cannot forbear remarking that in spite of the remarkable achievements which it has to its credit it leaves one—judging, at least, from the account of it given by Innes H. Pearce and Lucy H. Crocker (*The Peckham Experiment*, 1943)—a little uneasy. For it is an Experiment, not only in the field of human biology, but also, in common with any number of others today, in dealing with life on the basis of the restricted philosophy of Humanism. The point is, quite simply, in our attempts to control life can we really afford to leave out of account all conscious association with the great realm of the Unseen? Is the aim of producing healthy and happy families by itself enough? What of the Background against which they developed their liberated energies?

The fact that there is no entry under 'religion' in the index of the book one today simply takes for granted. But what is interesting is that its authors appear to assume without any misgivings that a type of culture which makes scarcely any provision for it is really securely founded. It is not simply a question of devotion and ethics, but of gaining a knowledge of the unseen forces which are all the time conditioning the visible, physical situation. Is it possible that we have to do with social workers who are at once splendid humanitarians—and inferior philosophers who are unduly limiting the field of their observations? Time alone will show.

already noted that all sorts of more subtle and intangible forces are continually entering into the complex from a deeper level and rendering their calculations ineffective.

On the other hand it cannot escape our attention that in earlier phases of history when men's bodies were far less effectively protected against disease, they contrived to manifest a high order of spiritual vitality. The organism may have been externally more vulnerable, but it was opened inwardly to the influx of powerful forces which made for the radiation of nobility and glory even in the midst of the physical disorder and confusion. And this impels us to suspect that in our modern absorption with the mechanics of human existence we have lost touch with those deeper levels of life and power without contact with which no truly human development is possible. For science by its concentration on the phenomenal has fatally cut us off from that which lies more deeply within. The knowledge derived from cool and dispassionate research has obscured, and even killed, that more interior knowledge which, because it is of the Spirit, can alone really liberate and exalt the nature. In order to become truly whole we must balance our preoccupation with the technical aspects of living by the cultivation of that deeper, stronger and more beautiful knowledge which is of the heart.

But the mark of this second type of understanding is that it is arrived at by each individual for himself from within. And this again brings out the significant difference between the subjective and objective approach to experience. For one of the effects of the increasingly scientific approach to social problems is the substitution of external for internal control over the human organism. Responsibility and authority are being rapidly displaced from that spiritual centre which is located within to those administrative and technical centres which are being so lavishly established without.



I as an individual know scarcely anything about myself, but fortunately around me there is a circle of clever gentlemen with spectacles and university degrees who *do*. Or at least, although they have no knowledge of me in particular, who am quite insignificant, they will surely be able collectively to bring general principles to bear upon my case. So there is really nothing to worry about. All I need to do is to take a card on which one expert has scribbled something unintelligible to me, show it to another, who will add a few more technical comments and pass me on to still another, and in the end they will together discover why I feel so unhappy and ill. Nor will this ordeal be very severe for me as it is all being paid for by the Government which, I am proud to think, has my welfare at heart. Anyway, how can *I*, who have had no scientific training, possibly be expected to understand my own situation?

All this must be seen in its proper perspective. It is certainly true that only highly trained experts can understand the enormously complicated processes which go on in every individual organism. And as science progresses this will become increasingly the case. But at the same time this multiplication of knowledge is also in one sense self-defeating. For analysis in this field has already been carried so far that it is becoming more and more impossible to coordinate the mass of particulars which result, and gain a clear picture of the general situation involved. To put it simply, when all the facts have been spread out before our vision nobody can put Humpty-Dumpty together again in any satisfactory sense. Synthesis has been overpowered by analysis and the wood lost for the trees.

Does it follow then that the dispirited citizen has no alternative to this meek submission to a deeply unsatisfactory situation? Obviously not. For although he may be unable to comprehend the intricate bio-chemical implications of his own behaviour he has at least *one* decisive

advantage over the experts who are trying, but so often failing, to help him: he alone occupies a really central position in this welter of complications, he alone is standing at the point from which all these influences radiate, and on which they all converge. The key to the whole problem is evidently the preservation of equilibrium, the balancing of the forces which are at work within the mind and body, and up to a point it is in his own hands.

In other words he can counter the host of doctors, educationalists, radiologists, psycho-therapists, orthopaedic and other experts by which he is surrounded by mastering the basic science of self-knowledge. He can awaken to the possibilities of spiritual hygiene, mind control, *yoga*, mystical contemplation and interior recollection, and begin to set his house in order with his own hands, tackling the problem at its roots within his own being. And if he perseveres he will be astonished at the results. His vital processes will become rhythmic, his health will improve, his intuitions will be quickened, he will begin to think organically instead of mechanically, and he will be able to deal with his professional and domestic problems in a way in which he was unable to before.

It must be fully admitted that a great deal of the work of our contemporary psychologists is devoted to referring the individual back to himself in this manner. But with all this the age is one in which scientific values are dominant, and in which as a result people have an insufficient faith in the power of the Spirit within. There is a powerful tendency to conclude that knowledge is something that is ascertained by technical investigation and recorded in an established scientific notation. Our present excessive dependence on expert outside opinion in these matters, which is acceptable enough in its place, will be corrected only by a deepened realisation of the value of that inner guidance which reaches the soul from a much deeper source.

One must make every effort to view this problem in the right perspective. There can be little doubt that our modern sociologists have at their command a technique which offers remarkable possibilities for the future. Man has not only awakened to the fact that he must now take full and conscious responsibility for his own destiny, but he has already forged tools with which he can, if he wishes to, condition human beings to an extreme degree from infancy onwards. No imaginative person can fail to realise the considerable potentialities of such an organization as the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations. Our reactions are largely matters of habit, determined primarily by early training. If, therefore, desirable attitudes could be inculcated by scientific methods while the child is still young it is plain that the whole character of social life could in course of time be transformed out of all recognition. For there is obviously a very great difference between the mere affirmation of moral principles and the application of scientific methods based on exact and tested knowledge of how individuals actually react to their environment.

In view of all this it is natural enough that sociologists should have unbounded confidence in the methods which they have developed. Yet it is clear to the reflective observer that there is a deeper level of life which they cannot touch. This admirable concern with human relationships must evidently be balanced by an equally serious concentration upon those transcendental realities which lie beyond all science—otherwise the true regenerative influences cannot be liberated within the soul. The inner keys to life, energy and order will never be secured and the calculations of the men of science will be perpetually thrown out by the operation of factors which are beyond their understanding. But this of course will only be apparent to those who have awakened to the reality of inner association with the Divine, and become aware of the illumination and power which result.

## 4. THE FUNCTION OF SUBLIMITY

What it comes to is that in this field scientific ends, although legitimate enough in themselves, can be safely pursued only in conjunction with others of a more elevated type.

On an earlier page I advanced the view that the aims of socialist reformers are largely materialistic. They are moved by a noble and passionate desire to provide decent conditions for the mass of toiling humanity. In the case of many this impulse is only too evidently determined by bitterness induced by misery, cruelty and injustice to which they themselves have been subjected. In the case of others again we have to reckon with an element of envy and greed—the desire to have as much of this world's goods as possible. But whatever the motive involved the immediate objective is that of extending the range of material welfare.

The ugly truth is that the great mass of the proletariat are capable of conceiving of the benefits of socialism only in these extremely limited terms. Their supreme desire is to be 'happy'—and happiness in all too many cases means for them nothing higher than the enjoyment of comfort and security. This, the progressive reformer would urge, is of course only through their lack of education; once new and enlightened institutions are established people's thoughts and sympathies will be raised to a higher level.

But to think in this way is only to fall into the error on which I have already commented earlier: that of overlooking the personal struggles and achievements which lie behind the creation of external organizations. Of course to the degree that such organizations are successfully brought into existence they will work back powerfully upon those subjected to their influence. But they must be evolved and maintained by people; and those people will emerge only as a result of a response to certain deep spiritual

influences which socialism cannot by itself engender. The argument for salvation by education is plausible only on condition that we leave out of account this essential link in the chain.

For those who are more imaginative, and for the reformers who are working on their behalf, it means of course also the possibility of enjoying cultural satisfactions—books, art, philosophy, music.

But what this implies, it will be observed, is the theory that man can first of all create, by his control over matter, a prosperous social regime and *then* be free to devote himself to more lofty ends. The engineers and the technicians will build the massive framework of the structure and the details will be filled in afterwards by the artists, poets, visionaries and philosophers. Penny Plain will provide the foundation for Twopence Coloured.

We have already seen that this conception breaks down for the reason that technical enterprises actually involve us with 'private' psychological and ethical problems to an extreme degree. What I now want to submit is that it fails also to take account of the fact that an excessive concentration on material objectives is spiritually self-defeating. Here in the first place we can, I think, learn something from the history of Soviet ideology. For the rulers of Russia have been forced to the realisation that the enterprise of creating a 'socialist paradise' is in many respects so utterly dreary that it is essential to relieve it by balancing Marxism with the cult of a heavily romanticized nationalism. In other words, the fact is recognised that man cannot derive sufficient inspiration from the realisation of material ends alone. It is not enough to offer 'life' to the populace as the distant and uncertain outcome of a weary series of five-year plans; it must be introduced into the equation, in however questionable terms, long before that hypothetical point is reached.

If, now, we consider the equivalent situation in our western world, what do we find? First of all we must, I suggest, do full justice to the fact that the supreme objective of socialism—'happiness'—is from one point of view a dangerous aim to set before the human mind. Of course no-one but a downright sadist would wish to diminish people's reasonable enjoyment of 'the good things of life'. We must obviously exert every effort to do away with slums, starvation and disease. But we must also keep clearly before our minds the fact that prosperity has little connection with spirituality as ordinarily understood, and can be even positively inimical to it.

It certainly does not by itself make for concern with higher things. On the contrary, as the religious have always insisted, it carries with it a constant temptation to self-indulgence, triviality, luxuriation in mere physical well-being, preoccupation generally with the lesser things of life. It is a dangerous fallacy to conclude that leisure will necessarily tend to promote any serious interest in the deeper problems of existence. 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of central-heating, automobiles and electrical appliances, and the rest shall be added unto you.' Such is the creed of all too many socialists. But the truth is that if we aim too narrowly and exclusively at such ends as 'full employment' and 'security' we are courting a serious danger. For that idealism and transcendence of materialism which are the essential conditions of saving society from destruction are secured most surely by turning *away* from the world and not towards it.

Freedom is a double-edged tool. While poverty can be a powerful incentive to crime, it is also true that 'welfare' opens the door, not only to 'nice' activities like studying botany, reading history and listening to good music, but also to forms of wickedness which the oppressed and over-driven have not yet had the leisure to conceive and practise.

That liberty which is denied the ignorant simply provides an opportunity for whatever happens to be latent in the soul to unfold its nature. I once wrote, and I hold to it today: 'To become sufficiently refined to appreciate Beethoven is merely to have transferred oneself to the level on which one can for the first time realise the significance of the Marquis de Sade.'\* The potentially good and the potentially evil are found in all classes; all one can say is that amongst the poor there is a greater provocation to violence and amongst the rich a greater temptation to seduction. Only to the degree that the aims of socialism are realised in a particular section of society do the full implications of the moral problem appear.

One may observe in passing that it is a crisis in this realm which awaits Russia at the point—if ever it be reached—when the last of her five-year plans have been triumphantly carried out. We, or our descendants, will then see how, when the heat of revolution has subsided, her rulers will deal with a people who have been provided with an ethic which, appropriate enough as it is for the struggle for social victory, appears to afford no secure foundation for dealing with its fruits.

There can be little doubt that man's constant disposition to seduction by externals has in the course of the last century been powerfully reinforced by the progress of science. For it lies in the very nature of this type of interest that it directs the attention outwards upon the world of phenomena. And this does not only mean the opening up of fascinating vistas in the fields of biology, physics and chemistry; it means also the creation of a whole world of material conquests, ingenious inventions, brightly coloured externals, intriguing relativities, all of which provide an almost irresistible temptation to lose sight of the deeper things within.

\* *The Learned Knife*, 1928, p. 274.

The effect of science upon the minds of the population as a whole sufficiently indicates the influence which it exerts in turning people away from the inner world of the subjective. We are all living today in a masculine, metallic world of bright, hard and sharp outlines which at every point emphasize form at the expense of content, the logical at the expense of the organic and mechanics at the expense of poetry. The command entailed over externals is tremendous, and cannot but command our respect. But it is by now sufficiently evident that unless this control over the superficial levels of experience is balanced by respect for internal depth we shall be faced with the danger of sterility.

Further, science is bringing into existence a historically new type of thinker, regarding whose proclivities we cannot but have serious misgivings: the technician who is interested in the world only from an extremely limited point of view, and who has practically lost the capacity for thinking along other lines. And finally we have to consider that science inevitably creates an atmosphere which is favourable to scepticism, and not only that scepticism which is the healthy condition of exact thought, but the scepticism which cuts people off disastrously from that experience of the Unseen without which they cannot properly live.

One may fairly say that those thinkers amongst us today who are vindicating the claims of 'values' receive little inspiration from science in the process. On the contrary, they find themselves at almost every point obliged to resist and overcome the emotional and intellectual atmosphere which has been created by three hundred years of scientific enquiry. As I have repeatedly insisted throughout this work, scientific research brings with it inevitably a bias towards materialism and phenomenalism. And it is propitious, as experience has shown, to the development of philosophies which exalt the material and the biological



at the expense of the Spirit. Even when scientific thinkers are sympathetic to spiritual values, the fact remains that as scientists they are looking at this inner realm from the outside. Although they may assign significance to it as something to which science points as lying beyond itself, they do not know it from within, and are incapable of interpreting its processes to us.

The following passage from a recently published article brings out the nature of the situation in clear terms:

Psychologists, dominant influences in the field of education, have begun to realise that when a student is indoctrinated with the idea that his confused self is simply and solely a bundle of conditioned reflexes, he is a poor candidate for superimposed exhortations to idealistic behaviour. Ethics professors who spend the first half of their course telling students the degree to which a primary "moral nature" has no basis in fact, find a common response to counsels of perfection subsequently given in Ethics B, to be summarized in three words: "Why should I?" Before reaching this all-embracing conclusion in an Ethics course, moreover, students have received considerable impulsion along the same general pathway of thought by the insistence of the average anthropologist or biologist on man's being a fortuitous concurrence of atoms, coming from nowhere and with a similar destination.\*

All this can only, I suggest, bring us back to the fundamental principle that any concentration on material aims is extremely dangerous unless it is balanced by an equivalent concentration upon the higher regions of experience. The fact must be faced that matter is exerting a constant downward pull upon our human organisms. To counteract it we must direct our minds unremittingly to the metaphysical realm within. Otherwise sooner or later we shall find that we are becoming involved in disorder, or overcome by sterility. Paradoxically enough, we can control

\* Harvey Westcott, "Morals at the Crossroads in the U.S.A.", *The Aryan Path*, February, 1942.

matter only by concentrating on that which is its opposite, and of which it is the external manifestation. Unless we begin to know ourselves as spiritual beings we shall be drawn into confusion and darkness by the bodies which we are inhabiting. Only in the sublime can man find an antidote to the Diabolical with which he is constantly threatened. Soul and body are one; but their proper relationship can be maintained only from the standpoint of the first. It is only the real man who can relate himself with impunity to physical matter. And the real man dwells within.

### 5. THE PROBLEM OF A DYNAMIC

Nor is it only a question of overcoming the inherent inclination of the human creature towards materialism. In an earlier chapter I referred to the fact also that at the present epoch of history the masses are the victims to an unprecedented degree of helplessness and uncertainty.

Further, not only have we to contend today with a great amount of positive wrong-doing, but we are confronted also with the still more serious factor of widespread apathy. The artificial, monotonous and characterless nature of most people's employment—it can rarely be dignified by the title of labour—is steadily and insidiously killing their finer responses, driving them to superficial and profitless relaxation as a compensation for the uninspiring daily round. As the level of work sinks, that of diversion inevitably sinks with it. Only the undiscerning will be surprised at the passion of the workers for vulgar spectacles; football and the dogs are the precise complement of soul-destroying work in the office and the factory, and will continue to exercise their appeal until the whole system is transformed.

By what agency is the life of the community to be raised above this level? Well, first of all there is, it must be admitted, a certain inspiration to be derived in this matter

from science itself. That is to say, the technique of applying scientific method to the solution of some of the material problems before us is for many a source of stimulation and satisfaction. They feel that science is rendering the enterprise of making a new world far more attractive than it could have been in earlier epochs. For it holds out to us the prospect of taking part in large-scale operations, involving the highest degree of organization, and carried out by technical means which are in themselves extremely fascinating. A completely new type of attack is being made on all sorts of social problems which were formerly regarded as being insuperable, or which were approached by the ineffective road of haphazard personal charity.

Today, however, as a result of our experience in the war, we are fully awake to the possibility of systematically bringing vast and concentrated forces to bear upon them. The obstacle to improving human conditions in all sorts of respects is not only, as we had hitherto imagined, the hardness of the human heart, but our inability to realise the possibilities of 'thinking big'. Just as it has been decisively brought home to us today that we can destroy one another completely if our evil inclinations prevail, so has it been demonstrated to us no less definitely that we can also, if our finer sympathies find expression, improve the whole character of man's material situation out of all recognition. The resources and the technical appliances are already in our hands, and they are nothing to those which will be accessible to us in a few decades. Theoretically at least we can open up, close down, transform, interconnect, dissociate the elements in our physical environment pretty well as we like.

We have already seen, however, that propaganda along such lines leaves out of account the deep personal problems implied in all such undertakings. And in any case what is an inspiration for a few has little meaning for the many.

So we are brought back to the realisation that unless society receives a powerful spiritual impulse from some quarter or other it will be incapable of rising above its present condition. But although this fact is seriously appreciated by the religiously-minded of all schools, we find that the majority of scientists fail to perceive its significance. This for the sufficient reason that their training makes for an intense concern with the outer world and a commensurately weak grasp of the subjective realm within.

What we discover, in fact, is that they tend to manifest a sunny and childish optimism regarding the natural goodness of man, a lack of understanding of that dark mystery which theologians describe as the Fall, and a highly inadequate comprehension of the extent and character of the labour which is called for to make men regenerate. As a consequence we find them placing a naïve and unjustified belief in the possibility of achieving this tremendous task by the application of their own limited technique to the problem. They cherish the notion that the inner life of man can also be dealt with by having recourse to their own professional methods. And this means in effect that they place an altogether undue amount of faith in psychology and education.

Scientific principles can certainly be applied with effect to psychology; they enable us at least to proceed with method and to control the outer aspects of the problem. But its essence, as we have noted earlier, is a type of understanding which comes from a very different source and is promoted by very different agencies. The root of the matter is an insight born of love. And this, again, is closely bound up with art and religion.

There is, however, one respect in which science can help us in dealing with subjective experience. It is by now fairly clear that the religion of the future will be very much more scientific in character than the old. The modern individual

rightly demands that in every field of enquiry the facts shall be approached in a cool and dispassionate spirit, and that of religion offers no exception to the rule. Of course the deepest aspects of the spiritual can only be represented in terms of high symbols and apprehended in an exalted state of mind. But the less elevated levels of religious experience are such that they can be approached from a scientific angle. In any case the spiritual seeker of today is not to be satisfied with emotional appeals, pious and unverified beliefs, and hallowed observances; he wants to understand his own inner nature and the character of the forces which are at work in the invisible world around him. Religion is for him in one aspect a superior type of knowledge, and all knowledge, whatever its character, is to be tested and weighed, and judged on its own merits.

So here we have one direction at least in which science can be linked up with spiritual endeavour. It can ensure the preservation of an attitude of mind which is fatal to credulity and superstition. But the fact remains that the essence of the matter—a living experience of the Divine both within and without ourselves—is the fruit of an entirely different approach to experience. In the last resort our salvation, if it comes to us at all, will reach us only from above.

## *Chapter Seven*

### THE THEOCRATIC ORDER

I HAVE already on an earlier page explained what I mean by the term Theocracy.\* I want now to indicate in general terms certain tendencies in our modern sociological thought which point in this direction. Or shall I say that I wish to call attention to certain features of our modern problem to which the theocratic thinker is particularly sensitive. A consideration of theocratic organization—or rather, avoidance of organization—belongs to the next chapter. Here it is a question only of discussing some of the more significant movements which can be detected in that direction.

#### 1. THE IMPOTENCE OF THE PAST

The first point which must be stressed in dealing with this problem is that it can be solved only in distinctively modern terms. There can be no return to that condition of affairs which existed before man was awakened to full self-consciousness. Although the major elements in our human situation—God, man and nature—must ever remain the same, they must be reconciled in accordance with the spirit of our age.

It is not difficult to see why the mediaeval attitude to man and society, however satisfactory it was in certain respects, can never again be our own. For it was achieved within the framework of a system which has irrevocably disappeared, the basis of which was a simple and uncritical

\* See pp. 37-8.

acceptance both of existing social institutions and the authority of the Church. Today, however, we are confronted with the far more formidable problem of establishing a living relation to the Divine *after* a passage through a searching phase of individualism. Our essential difficulty is one which was simply not presented to the people who lived before A.D. 1500—that of reconciling the awakened individual with the society into which he is born. Today he is called upon to achieve in full consciousness and responsibility those basic realisations which his predecessors enjoyed in far more simple terms. And it should surely be apparent that when he thus finds his way back to fundamentals he will solve the problem in accordance with the distinctive character of the age in which he is living and not simply by returning to the past. He may indeed shape for himself a philosophy which is compatible in certain directions with that of his forebears, but it will correspond to it only in that it is on a higher turn of the spiral. His symbols, his formulations, his social structures, his intellectual categories, his disciplines will be different, and appropriate to the fact that he is the child of a new age.

And it is essentially on this account, I think, that one is so disappointed with the attitude of those who lay such weight today on the achievements of earlier centuries. Not that one fails to appreciate what they entailed. But one is astonished at such traditionalists' inexcusable lack of curiosity regarding the universe which science has brought into existence for us. To argue that because a spiritual pattern was once woven in terms of extremely simple elements we must return to it (by sacrificing machinery to crafts, and the like) *after* all sorts of other and more challenging elements have been presented to us, is surely hopelessly unimaginative and sentimental.

Let us freely admit that without a return to the organic we are lost. But let us recognise equally freely that the

design which we are shaping must incorporate *all* the best elements in the world which is now known to us. And here we must begin by doing full justice to our debt to modern science. For although its applications have been terribly abused it remains true that it has aided us enormously in overcoming the limitations which attend any life which is led too exclusively on the natural plane. Thanks to our modern discoveries we are in sight of reducing enormously that excessive amount of physical labour which was called for in an eotechnic age, we have far greater control over disease than men had in earlier centuries, and we have put an end to that extreme degree of isolation which was in the past an inescapable feature of rural life and is fatal to the emergence of culture outside the boundaries of cities. And finally, it is science which has provided us with the most powerful instrument of all with which to counteract the stupefying and retarding influence of a too primitive mode of existence (Marx's 'idiocy of the village')—a picture of the vast and overpowering background against which our over intensified little rural drama is played.

It is now plain that neither unsophisticated Arcadianism nor laboratory-controlled civilization can by themselves solve our problem. Both extremes are completely unacceptable to the imaginative modern man. The organic and the mechanical aspects of our culture must be both fully acknowledged and synthesized. Instead of evading the dangerous and fascinating possibilities offered us by modern technics we must grasp them resolutely, and be equally resolute in weaving them into a new pattern in which the manifestations of nature, art and science will be creatively and harmoniously blended.

It is essential, of course, that in this synthesis the mechanical should be properly subordinated to the organic, for the higher forms of life must necessarily prevail over the lower. And this means, in an age in which machines



have nearly destroyed both nature and man, the almost complete reversal of their present relations. Nevertheless one must stick to the fact that both elements must be fully appropriated in building the new forms of life.

All this points to the fact that, however formidable the difficulties with which we have to contend, we are moving towards what may be described as a more dematerialized mode of existence (what Toynbee has described as the 'etherialization of culture'), in which we are less polarized to the forces of physical nature. It is certainly true that the mass of the population is at present devitalized as a direct result of living a denaturalized, urban type of existence. But one must insist also on the fact that restoration will not come *only* from a 'return to Nature', but also from a more discerning appropriation of the more subtle and refined influences which are now playing upon our organisms. For there can be little doubt that the realms of experience which are opened up by an 'artificial' mode of existence are only injurious to man in certain respects. As we become more mentalized we may, if we are not careful, deteriorate. But we are also provided with more subtle equivalents of the cruder natural sources from which our ancestors drew their vigour. The mind, when properly used, can build up and restore by its power of polarizing non-physical forces, and the more cultivated and sensitive we become the more use we can make of it in this respect. In fact if we do not employ it in this manner we shall fail to preserve our equilibrium.

## 2. FORWARD FROM NATURE

With this I am brought to a theme which although many will find it unsympathetic, demands to be fairly faced: the relation of social organization to man's experience of the great Unseen.

From the point of view of the present study the essence

of the situation is this. When it comes to providing a badly needed compensation for our excessive subjection to industrialism and mechanization even the more imaginative planners among us have failed to get beyond the point of prescribing a closer association with the natural realm. Such invigoration and renewal is, of course, essential. But at the same time we must not lose sight of the fact that in another sense we are collectively moving *away* from Nature in the direction of the 'inner planes of being'. The vast progress which we are making in opening up the possibilities of electricity is symbolical of the path to which we are committed. Even on the physical level we are manipulating forces of an ever more refined order, with a correspondingly lighter and more delicate type of machinery. And a minority is even pushing forward to investigate the character of still less material manifestations in the field of the supersensible.

In a word, we are to-day becoming more and more sensitive to 'Nature's finer forces'. We are beginning to realise that discipline such as *yoga* are for many of us more appropriate and effective than the laborious physical routine which is involved in the traditional process of 'keeping fit'. In all sorts of directions we are coming increasingly into touch with an invisible Ambient which contains vast possibilities for the future of humanity. This phase of our development is sometimes referred to as the beginning of the Aquarian Age, and we cannot arrive at an adequate picture of our individual and social future unless we take it into account.

Man in the days to come will not only draw his power from physical Nature and association with his fellows here on earth, but call upon the vast resources of the unseen universe about him. He will be vitalized, not only from without, but also from within. We are at last in Western Europe awakening to the fact that material forms, includ-

ing our own bodies, are the creatures of mind, and this is a first step towards the realisation that we can energize ourselves and transform our surroundings by setting in motion impulses of a non-physical order which will compel matter to their rhythm. Our long bondage to earth is coming to an end, and the final phase of our emancipation will be achieved by the exercise of our mastery on the mental plane.

One may in fact venture on the statement that all attempts to solve our psycho-physical problems in terms of green belts, vitamins, sun bathing and fresh air will fail, even in conjunction with psychological treatment. Necessary as these rejuvenating agencies are, they must be supplemented by others appropriate to the character of the New Age. Man has reached a point in his evolution at which he must establish a vital association with the inner planes of life or suffer a decline as a result. Our salvation depends on our ability to transcend matter, to progress even beyond natural therapeutics, and relate ourselves directly to the still more powerful forces accessible to us within. All this is, of course, shockingly unorthodox, but the intelligent reader will not dismiss it too lightly.

It is worth while pointing out also that that sphere of existence to which the student of these problems relates himself is essentially *organic*. In the first place he stands in a close relation to physical nature through his concern with the principle of sacramentalism—the spiritualization of the forms of the natural world. And that inner world of forces and powers into which he penetrates in the subjective mode represents the spiritual equivalent of the Nature which we perceive without. The imagery in which it abounds is associated essentially with the processes of life—brilliant colours, plant and animal symbology, elemental forms, manifestations of the angelic hierarchies. And even when geometrical figures are employed they are

endowed with a particular quality. As a result it works out that he is always more or less of an artist; his response is to quality and vital processes. And through this association with life in its interior and invisible mode he vitalizes himself just as effectively as does the nature lover who energizes only through the medium of the physical senses. But all this raises complicated and controversial questions into which I cannot enter here.

### 3. DEMOCRACY AND RELIGION

When we turn from the past to the future we are met first of all with the fact that we are seeking to build up a new society on the foundation of what we describe as Democracy. We have already had a glance at this conception in an earlier chapter from the point of view of its shortcomings, and I now want to consider it in its more positive aspect. What I chiefly wish to bring out is that we are concerned in this matter with assumptions and presuppositions which are essentially religious.

The distinctive mark of the democratic way of life is that society should be so organized that the individual shall be free to develop his distinctive nature in harmony with that of his fellow men. Absolute freedom is an unrealisable possibility, a utopian myth. The problem is to secure as much liberty as possible within the limits imposed by social existence. The first thing here is to recognise that man is *not* by nature exclusively an egoistic individualist; although he is powerfully moved in one direction to seek his own profit, he is no less definitely a social being who is impelled to link himself with others, and his character is largely determined by the associations into which he enters.

It follows that his personal interests and those of society in general are so intertwined that, as Professor Hayek points out,\* from one point of view at least nothing could be more

\* *Individualism: True and False* (1946).

realistic than the theory advanced by such thinkers as de Tocqueville and Adam Smith that men should be persuaded to seek individual ends in such a way that they thereby minister to the common good. Or again, attention has been called to the fact that the bourgeoisie of the seventeenth century by fighting for their own rights and liberties were also fighting for those of humanity as a whole.\* For men are deeply selfish, and the only real hope for the reformer is to lead them *via* their selfishness into the realm of communal purposes and dedications.

Recognition of these hard facts commits us to a social system entailing all sorts of compromises—such as, for instance, majority rule which, although by its very nature it prevents the wisest from governing, does at least imply a principle of justice in that it provides for the possibility of the minority of to-day becoming the majority of tomorrow. And so on.

But the most important element in a spiritual philosophy of life is the stress which it lays upon concrete as opposed to abstract thinking. It is repugnant to all systems which deal with society first and foremost from the standpoint of general conceptions, and which therefore incline irresistibly towards centralism and the exaltation of the State. From this it follows that the sympathies of the humanist flow in a very definite direction. Thus, although he recognises that men should be treated equally, he is not so foolish as to deny their inequality in all sorts of respects. He champions the rights of amateurs against those of professionals even in the sphere of government. He insists that every person's talents and capacities must somehow be made use of, and that it is the individual alone who knows best what he ought to do. He gives the fullest support to the principle of voluntary association and cooperation. He lays weight on the function of uncodified customs and conventions which

\* *The Three Spheres of Society* by Charles Waterman (1946), p. 22n.

guide men in an easy and natural fashion in their behaviour, as against formal regulations and enactments. He is persuaded that 'muddling through' is a more creative process than the scientifically-minded suppose. He believes that if scope is given for spontaneity and experimentation truth will emerge by a process of trial and error, mutual correction, reinforcement and supplementation. He denies that any individual or group, however centrally placed, can know what is for the best for all. And he affirms that the end emerges in the process, so that men who go forward together in faith may find that they have brought into existence something greater than they suspected when they set out.

I think it will be evident to the reader that the kind of emphasis which is revealed by the above preferences is closely connected with religion, even though most of those who hold such views are not consciously religious in their outlook. For when it has not been reduced to the level of a rationalistic humanism religion involves essentially, not only a belief in the sanctity of the personality, but the conviction that calculation is a relatively superficial process and that we can only walk largely in faith.

In this matter we are compelled to 'feel our way', to rely upon immediate inspirations, to stick to that which lies nearest to hand and resist dangerous speculations and generalisations, to respect fully the original and distinctive contributions made by those around us, since they may lead to unsuspected constructive results. All this is anti-rationalistic and destructive of abstract ideology, as it implies the conviction that our deeper selves—what we call in our modern jargon the 'Unconscious'—are attuned to more creative and ultimate purposes than reason can define. At the roots of the whole attitude there lies what can only be described as a mystical order of awareness.

One must insist, however, that it is in the light of a

religious philosophy alone that these quasi-conscious processes can be rendered fully intelligible. As I have had occasion to point out earlier, the view is now generally accepted among scholars that our liberal and humanist principles represent, as it were, a 'hangover' from an earlier religious epoch. In the course of a century of increasingly secularized thought men have lost sight of the sublime Source to which they were originally referred, but in spite of this fact they still retain a great deal of their former virtue. Nevertheless, since that conscious reference to the Divine on which they once depended is no longer being maintained this must make—or at least so the religious philosopher would affirm—for a steady weakening in the moral sphere, a weakening which we are witnessing today on all sides. This is not to say that a re-discovery of religion must necessarily entail a return to orthodox Christianity; but it does certainly imply that a humanism which is severed from its roots in a deeper order of experience has no enduring power.

Further, I would myself urge that apart from this evident lack of moral dynamic, we have also to reckon with the obscure, incomplete and unsatisfactory character of all interpretations of experience which are based on a philosophy which fails to reach down to fundamentals. I would maintain that only in the light of a clear recognition of the Divine Reality can our human condition be rendered at all intelligible, and subordinate manifestations ranged in their proper order. The alternative is always excessive complexity, vagueness and contradiction. Metaphysics is not merely an optional embellishment to a philosophical structure which is to be regarded as sufficient in itself; it is the only discipline which can really render intelligible the material with which we are struggling in this realm—on this one must insist. Only when we begin at the summit does everything fall into its proper place. Although this is

in flat contradiction with current interpretations of experience, I venture to affirm that to see clearly we must first turn our eyes towards that Centre from which everything proceeds.

The force of such considerations becomes apparent when we consider the attempts of secular philosophers to deal with the social problems which we are at present discussing. One cannot but perceive that although, as has appeared, a purely humanistic system of thought does a certain justice to man's actual modes of behaviour, it provides only a very unsatisfactory account of the deeper elements in our experience.

Thus we find Professor Hayek, in the brochure from which I have already quoted, emphasizing, justifiably enough, the principle to which I have alluded above that men can combine in freedom to secure greater ends than they suspect at the outset. Here a little analysis is called for. It is a commonplace that men are precluded, particularly in our complex modern civilization, from knowing the implications of their immediate actions. This results in the activity of what are apparently 'blind' economic forces, unexpected and disconcerting repercussions of our behaviour in relation to immediate objectives. But it is also true that people, while being no less concerned with immediacies, can contribute to the creation of some institution or convention which is *above* the level on which they started. In considering this mysterious process, however, Professor Hayek, who is dealing with the problem exclusively on the humanistic plane, can speak only in the vaguest terms of 'an attitude of humility towards the impersonal and anonymous social processes by which individuals help to create things greater than they know'.

Need one apologize for having no particular humility towards impersonal and anonymous processes? Anyway, the illumination thrown by religion on the problem is unambig-



uous enough, and is the theme of Newman's great hymn, *Lead, Kindly Light*. The fact that men when clutching at immediate satisfactions—such as hoarding in war-time—achieve only self-defeating results, and that when they relate themselves to the objective situation instead in a spirit of aspiration and faith they are led step by step to realise greater purposes suggests powerfully that by eschewing rationalism and trusting our deeper feelings we are really aligning ourselves with higher aims which correspond to the Divine Order. In other words we are led straight to the old-fashioned conception of Providence, and the possibility that inspired action involves attunement to greater intelligences than ours in the Unseen with whose plans—which are widely different from those evolved by our 'planners'—we are able in some measure to conform.

#### 4. THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE ORGANIC

Up to this point we have been concerned only with certain very general considerations of what may be described as a 'classical' type. We must now seek to apply them to our distinctively modern situation, in connection with our attempts to build up a twentieth-century order. And here we are met with the fact that, not only in this particular field, but in a much wider sense as well, our categories of thought are undergoing a profound transformation. This does not, I suggest, affect that basic relationship between morality and politics which we have just been discussing; but it *does* mean that our specific aims and objectives will assume a different character.

What it comes to briefly is that as a result largely of the influence of science we have acquired the habit of thinking in a mechanical mode, in terms of separate individual units which enter into different types of fixed relationships

with others. As is well known, this tendency runs through philosophy, psychology, law, sociology and even theology. Experience is atomized and particularized, and the facts thus isolated become the subject of abstract generalizations. But now in every direction we are becoming sensitive to the significance of forms, patterns, organic structures and wholes, the essence of the matter in every case being that what was formerly regarded as an independent object is considered, with far more fruitful results, as an element in a system and as being determined by the function which it performs therein.

In terms of the social order this development has a double significance. In the first place the individual fulfils himself only to the degree that he becomes a member of a group—a question of major importance with which I shall deal in the next chapter. And in the second place the principle emerges that life and meaning truly appear only in the realm of the concrete. It is only at those nodal points at which general tendencies and influences are brought to a focus and radiated outwards anew that true human fulfilment is possible. This means a tremendous emphasis upon the person, the family, the village, the region, on the local situation, on what that brilliant sociologist, Miss M. P. Follett,\* characterized as neighbourhood education and neighbourhood organization.

The essence of the matter is that in the nature of the case only the most mechanical elements in social life can, and should be, centrally controlled. I am not here concerned with the question of whether such control is actually more efficient than that achieved under private ownership, but with a deeper principle. The point is that it is only in respect of such elementary factors in the equation which affect individuals *equally*—such as railway transport and the utilization of atomic energy—that it is safe to introduce

\* *The New State*, 1918.

a common policy for the whole community. For it is a question in this case of manipulating basic economic factors which only achieve significance in so far as they serve more ultimate ends and are given application at particular times and places—in a word, which contribute to local situations in which alone meaning resides.

But in so far as an attempt is made to control centrally anything which *derives its character* from local treatment, usage or interpretation—then the State is killing life instead of contributing to its manifestation. Thus at one end of the scale central control over power agencies, forests and raw materials is *least* harmful (though it may imply a lot of vexatious bureaucratic procedure), for the reason that it is exercised *before* the local and significant situation has arisen. And at the other end a similar control of education is *most* harmful, for the reason that it is exercised *after* such a situation has arisen, and thus introduces standardization at a stage at which the free play of the human spirit should receive its maximum expression.

Of course this conception will possess force solely for those people who are sufficiently cultivated to realise that life only really appears on the creative level when diverse elements have been combined harmoniously at a particular point by the activity of imaginative minds. The kind of thinker—increasingly characteristic of our corrupted civilization—who is so occupied with mechanical processes that he forgets the higher purposes which they should ultimately serve—for whom, in fact, the utilitarian has thrust the teleological into the background—will fail to perceive its significance.

Again, not only is it more fitting that the State should control only the basic elements in the national economy; we have also to consider the fact that it cannot in any real sense control anything else. That is to say, although it can mechanically standardize all sorts of aspects of life, it

cannot regulate them in the sense that it gathers up and coordinates a multitude of different points of view regarding them. For this is, in fact, beyond the power of any body of men who claim to represent the interests of the people.

It is for this reason that appeals to assist the Government in its difficulties cannot be expected to meet with more than a limited and somewhat tepid response. For, consciously or semi-consciously, people recognise that its function is restricted to controlling the mechanism of social life, and that it can neither create nor express the forces which really energize and uplift the nation. At the most it is merely necessary; and ideally its operations should be reduced to a minimum. Of course the loyal citizen will dutifully obey its enactments, and even cooperate with its plans. And he may even be impressed by its considerations in certain directions for the people's welfare. But if he has any imagination at all he will look to something more ultimate for his inspiration. He may feel impelled to devote his life to the nation, recognizing that it is something more powerful, permanent and significant than any government which has been established. Or he may give his service to the cause of international unity. While if he is illuminated he will realise that what he is essentially dedicated to is the service of God.

Further, except during those critical periods in which the nation is artificially unified by a threat to its very existence, the individual's relation to the State as a whole lacks any really vital character. It is too abstract to draw out his powers in any creative sense. He is naturally determined absolutely by whatever general conditions are imposed upon the population by the Government. But it is not in terms of such conditions that his life is truly lived.

For it is plain that his personal situation is *not* in the first place the outcome of his direct concern with the conduct of national affairs. Such pronouncements as that

'every cook must learn to rule the state' (Lenin), or 'it ought to be part of a man's religion to see that his country is well governed' (Gladstone) must be properly understood. The connection between the situation of the individual voter and the general policy of the government he is supposed to have helped to elect is of the most tenuous character. His fate as a citizen is determined by the attitude and conduct of the small group which is directing affairs at the top. The shaping of the common pattern is their work, not his. His relation to the state-in-general is expressed almost entirely at the stage when he puts them into power—and even in this matter he is far more at the mercy of the rich, the persuasive and the strong-willed than he usually realises.

How, then, does his personality find expression? The answer can only be that he lives and fulfils himself primarily by entering into relations of a more immediate, local and organic order. He may in a wide and abstract sense be a citizen of the Empire, but in terms of action, expression and experience he is first and foremost a member of one or more groups within it. His associations, in fact, decrease in intensity and significance as he moves outwards from the intimate circle of his family *via* the club, the factory, the college, the district, the region to the country and the commonwealth in general. This in accordance with the principle that life is only real to him, only a living problem, within that relatively restricted sphere which he can reach directly through his physical senses. His 'radius of action' might, in fact, be defined as the region within easy reach of his dwelling-place. Of course all sorts of long-distance influences—conveyed by radio, aircraft, letterpress, etc.—are projected into this zone. But it is *in* that zone that they are appropriated, assimilated and combined, and *from* that zone again that they are reflected back, conditioned and individualized, into the wider world from which they came.

It is this fact which provides the most powerful argument against State Socialism. Socialism we must have; it manifestly represents the next great phase of social organization. But unless it can be developed in terms of the highest degree of regional and local autonomy we are faced with greater horrors than any which the capitalistic system has produced.

As to the consequences of the application of the system in any but the most restricted field, we have to recognise that the mere transference of ownership from private to public hands, although it may do away with certain evils inherent in commercialism, does little to alter the essential character of the institutions which are involved. Until our ideas regarding such questions as wage-earning, mass production, the relation between the mechanical and the organic, or between education and community life have been fundamentally revised we shall still be working within a framework which limits severely the higher possibilities of the human spirit. The State as employer is not necessarily any more enlightened than any other employer. We only come within real sight of dealing with such difficulties when we get to the point of introducing distinctively spiritual values into the texture of our social life.

All this, however, represents only one half of the problem. We have also today a deepening consciousness of the world situation in which we are called upon to live. That intense and colourful life which in an earlier cycle was enjoyed by the population in villages and small towns, and which is rightly regarded as being infinitely more rich and satisfying than the drab and sterile existence led by people today in industrial cities and suburban dormitories, involved an element of isolation which we today regard as undesirable. Although we are again awakening to the significance of the immediate and the concrete we are also becoming equally responsive to the inclusive and the

universal. The microscope and the telescope are being pressed into our service together. In one direction our vision is becoming steadily more intensive; we want to know in great detail what exactly is taking place at a particular spot, in a given area, under certain limiting conditions and circumstances. We have turned our backs on theorizing and speculation. Our demand is for documentation. We feel that we cannot attempt to deal with the situation until we have discovered as completely as possible what precisely it entails.

Further, this means very much more than the pedestrian realism which was cultivated by earlier observers. For amongst the facts which we are concerned to collect are those of a psychological order: we want to know not only how people are housed and fed, but what they enjoy, respond to, aspire towards—the whole complex, in fact, of the influences to which they are subjected.

Then in the opposite direction we are moving *away* from the localized and the restricted. We feel deeply that divisive emphasis on national, racial and cultural barriers is already out of date. As observed earlier,\* we are seeking to solve our problems in terms of One World, one system of interdependent relationships. Not only are we experiencing the fact that any development in one part of the planet can have repercussions in another seemingly unconnected with it, but we have developed all sorts of modern technical devices for overcoming the limitations of space and time.

From one point of view, of course, the mere reproduction of a manifestation in a remote part of the globe has no cultural significance. Banality does not change its character by being projected by technical devices halfway across the world. But at the same time this annihilation of distance has enormous importance as a symbol of the change in the

\* See p. 16, *seq.*

nature of our awareness. Isolation and separation have now completely lost their inevitable character for us; potentially, at any rate, they have been destroyed. We are well in sight of an epoch in which every point on the surface of the globe is accessible in a large measure to every other, in which mutual implication has been carried to an extreme degree.

In negative terms this could presage a nightmare: the end of privacy, constant exposure to invasion and destruction from every quarter, and the danger of a characterless fusion and blurring of all cultural influences instead of their orchestration and synthesis. But positively it could mean an enormous enrichment of life. In the first place—as is already beginning to be evident—cultural intensification can today be dissociated from physical localization. Instead of art and science being concentrated in big cities, each locality can select and draw to itself through various channels just what elements it requires to develop, in conjunction with its native resources, its own distinctive life. The discerning will be able to blend judiciously in the village or the home whatever influences Mexico, Wales, Tibet, Central America and the Far North may place at their disposal. And what is thus put into circulation will itself be properly defined—through that concern for the concrete and immediate to which I have referred above.

The philosophical implications are clear enough. We seem to be entering an era in which—if we do not destroy one another completely by the abuse of the discoveries which we have made—we shall realise in objective terms that sense of the Whole which has so far been attained to for the most part only by contemplative mystics. All—which means all things in terms of exact and concrete knowledge—is—which means simultaneity, compresence—One—which means a complete inclusiveness, the fulness and depth of which is in direct ratio to the range and



variety of the elements which it gathers up into a unity.

This is a conception for which the categories of logic cannot provide. Nor, it may be remarked, is it compatible with Hegelianism either. For instead of being involved with an Absolute which undermines the significance of the individual manifestations, it postulates a Whole within the realm of which the particular becomes more highly charged with meaning and value. In other words the part, instead of being regarded as 'infected with relativity', is seen to exist in its own right.

It may appear, of course, that such philosophical reflections have little significance for the ordering of our lives. But here it must be remarked that while in one direction one may proceed from the observed facts to certain general conclusions, in the other one can hold before the mind the image which has thus been disclosed and work back from it to life. And I would venture to suggest that this particular image is endowed with great potency. For like all true metaphysical conceptions it is not to be grasped by mere analysis alone. Not only does concentration upon it stimulate certain deep mystical processes in the being, but it also quickens one's apprehension of the most diverse aspects of life—just because we have to do with a Principle which not only embraces every possible element in reality, but vindicates completely the individual manifestation. At one and the same time it deprives Henry, Monaco, the local chess club, our 'corner' of Dorset, Miss X's rendering of Chopin, your particular treatment of line engraving, of their significance in so far as they are considered in isolation from the Whole—and justifies their emergence just so far as they are realised within it. And it goes powerfully to suggest that in the human realm in spite of our separation from one another in phenomenal terms, we are all at the roots completely dependent upon one another, so that as the mystics have always taught the key to creativeness is Love.

## 5. THE PATH OF THE INDIVIDUAL

So much for general philosophical principles. I now proceed to consider in general terms the way in which they work out in relation to the great task of creating a new type of society. And I begin with the problem as it presents itself to the individual.

I need not remind the reader that for religion all creative forces which are active in the human realm acquire significance only by passing through the focal point of individual experience. Truth, beauty and goodness become real for us only when they have been personalized. Hence the supreme obligation upon the awakened personality is first of all to discriminate and then to express resolutely that which he feels that he should do. And the deeper his consciousness the more likely will it be that he is moved as a result to concentrate upon solving those simple, unpretentious problems which are presented to him by his immediate environment, and which provide little reward in the way of excitement and stimulation compared to that which is derived from devotion to causes, movements and revolutionary enterprises.

The mark of almost all work which is in a deeper sense regenerative is that to the rationalistic eye it appears as unproductive and futile; it is very difficult for anyone who is not mystically illuminated to perceive its bearing upon large-scale social projects for 'reconstruction'. And it takes the form of the resolution of a succession of minor and apparently insignificant problems which are precisely of the type which the hasty intellect, eager to concern itself with broad, easily identifiable and seemingly more urgent issues, is inclined to dismiss as negligible. Yet, as the wise have always taught, it is with such unobtrusive and unpretentious bricks alone that the walls of the Celestial City can be built.

Any real awakening of the religious consciousness makes

always for a concentration upon those elements in life which the 'reformer' is too impatient or indiscriminating to consider. It impels us to begin at the beginning, at that point which seems to be most unpromising, least vital, and at which the spirit is most easily discouraged. This is the truth which no revolutionary who is not also deeply religious is ever prepared to face. But until it is accepted by the great mass of those who are seeking to create the new order no real advance will be made.

In the case of great numbers of people their work in the field of social reform may be a direct and sincere expression of their inner consciousness; this must be fully allowed. But for others there is always the danger that their activity is a process of compensation for a failure to devote themselves to far more searching undertakings nearer home. In the same way on the mental plane concern with ideology is only too often a substitute for that exact, responsible and more difficult thinking which is engendered by a proper experience of one's environment. While, as I have insisted earlier, a little careful analysis will always disclose the fact that general problems, collective enterprises, public institutions, 'impersonal laws' all both derive from and work back to those 'private' and personal situations on which everything depends. All creative processes begin and end with people.

Imbued with this realisation, the realistic individual simply does whatever he feels to be necessary, whether it appears to be trivial or momentous, domestic or social, local or nation-wide in its significance, silly or sagacious, whimsical or consistent, rebellious or law-abiding, audacious or diffident, according to the exigencies of the ever-changing situation. 'There is no size in reality.' His only concern is to remain true to the living impulses and intuitions which arise within his soul, and to leave interpretations, justifications and systematizations to others.

But with all this it is important, as we have seen, to realise that an individual may be called upon to occupy himself with the widest issues, the most general problems, the most abstract of undertakings. It is all a question of one's personal and unique *dharma*. But account must be taken of the fact that in this over-mentalized age the temptation to desert small-scale for large-scale enterprises is extreme. What is usually described as a 'career' involves more often than not a course determined by the persistent semi-conscious avoidance of a multitude of apparently minor problems, encounters and obligations which, if properly faced, would make for real growth at the expense of what is commonly represented as 'success'. But only the individual himself can ever know in what direction his damnation or salvation lies.

And here we are brought face to face with the classical religious conception of 'guidance'. All students of the subject agree that the more a person deepens his interior life, the more decisive become the intimations which he receives from the Within regarding the course which he should pursue. Something deeper than the discursive mind begins to exercise control over the situation; and it is not to be confounded with a mere uprush from the infra-mental realm. We are concerned rather with the deliverances of the 'superconscious', with communications from a realm which lies beyond and not behind us in the path of evolution.

The theological implications of the principle of 'guidance' can only be briefly indicated here. The essence of the matter is that the conception of doing God's will commits us to the idea that although we may at the time have little notion of what our actions entail, they are in *implicit* conformity with a deep and creative order. We are not here concerned with the mere cultivation of individualism. The point is that, whatever the fancies and proclivities of the surface mind, we have to assume if we are mystical that

within each of us is a higher Self which directs us only towards contributing to the good of all, towards playing our particular part in the Divine Plan for the world.

These intimations, conveyed through one's conscience, or one's Socratic daemon, are invariably *against* the inclinations of the more superficial biological self, and we have no real peace unless we attend to them. Nor are we, as some maintain, concerned only with the apprehension in a subjective mode of the dictates of custom and tradition. For it is a notorious fact that 'conscience' may pronounce most decisively against social and religious conventions, and drive the individual out of the gregarious fold into solitude and suffering.

Again, this interior surrender to the Divine does not entail any abrogation of the individual's rational powers; it means only that he calculates and plans in accordance with a wider range of data than that of which men normally take account. He becomes sensitive to factors in the equation to which the 'natural man' is blind. Furthermore, he is moved to make acts of pure faith, realising that certain things must be done, and yet understanding that the full significance of his actions can appear only perhaps long afterwards. I have already dealt with this situation from a different angle on another page.

To proceed in this way is to follow a path which is painful, perplexing and strange—far more strange than that which is defined for us by the calculations of an uninspired rationalism. But those who tread it are consoled by the consciousness that, in the face of all appearances, they are working for good in a fundamental sense. In spite of the veil which hangs heavily before their eyes, they are aware that they are contributing to those purposes which will prevail in the end.

Nothing can be achieved until the consciousness of the individual is deepened and quickened. And here two

elements present themselves. First of all men evolve all manner of systems, plans and principles the mark of which is that they can be considered and examined in the abstract—scientific formulations, statutes for institutions, legislative principles, codes, philosophies and the like. These achievements in the field of reason imply, of course, a preliminary response to direction from a deeper level of awareness. They could not have been produced unless their authors had shown some degree of sensitiveness to all kinds of intimations, flashes of imagination, and intuitions reaching them from day to day and even from hour to hour, and this not merely in respect of the actual projects on which they were working but in respect also of the conditions required to evolve them—impulses regarding diet, relaxation, propitious moments for work, changes of scene, consultation with others, selection of material and the like.

Yet the outcome of all this is the production of something impersonal, objective, existing as it were in its own right, which can be applied, standardized, set up, memorized, referred to, imposed for the purposes of instruction, legislation and practical action. But these plans must all be executed by, and applied to human beings. And this involves at every point contact between the 'public' and the 'private' aspects of knowledge. While schemes are, relatively speaking, fixed, individuals are continually encountering them from all sorts of angles and in an endless variety of circumstances. The abstract truths which they embody only acquire meaning and substance in so far as they are translated into terms of unique, individual and transitory situations which must be interpreted by each person at the exact point in space and time in which he momentarily finds himself.

But such qualities as improvisation, originality, individualization, spontaneity are clearly enough the results of

an entirely different order of discipline from that which ensures the production of impersonal projects and general principles. We are here indisputably concerned with the artistic and the feminine element in experience, with that sensitiveness to the immediate and unique which is the complement of masculine logic and reason. And if, to counterbalance our modern extreme emphasis upon science, we do not unfold these more evasive 'soul' qualities we shall obviously lose control over realities and spend our lives in a laboratory-directed nightmare.

And there is a still deeper element involved. In most cases sensitiveness and taste enable us to respond discriminatingly to the particular order of things by which we are surrounded. But it may well be the case that that order itself has been brought into existence through the disregard of intuitions of a still finer type. What is so discerningly achieved on one level is denied by that which lies at a still greater depth. This is the cause of our dissatisfaction with so many of those 'wise' little manuals on the 'art of living' with which we are all familiar. Adaptation which is exercised within the framework of a convention which fails to include the more profound demands of the spirit belong only to the realm of an uninspired humanism.

With 'guidance' of the type known to the religious we are evidently in much deeper water. It is now a question, not simply of the flexible interpretation of plans and schemes on what may be described as the humanistic level, but of response to impulses which, if they could be widely and consistently followed, would transform the whole character of society at its roots.

In other words those people who are really attuning themselves to the Inner Light are giving expression to realisations which constitute the foundation for a spiritual order of life. Such people intuitively resist the assumptions and conclu-

sions of the planners because they are more or less vaguely aware of the existence of other relationships of a far more profound, ordered and beautiful type which have not been taken into account. And these relationships, again, are just those to which we become responsive as a result of deepening our experience of the Divine. That is why in this book I describe the way of life which makes us sensitive to them as Theocracy, which is the regulation of human affairs through the power of God as it is manifested in the human heart.

It works out, therefore, that in relation to our contemporary civilization the activity of 'conscience' makes in most instances for criticism. To be spiritually awakened in the present age is to find oneself in revolt against most existing institutions—or at least against the mode in which they are conducted. For there is little outside which corresponds in any complete fashion with that which is seeking expression from within. So the more fully a person's deeper consciousness is awakened, the more definitely is he impelled to a *radical* solution of both his own and wider social problems. It is a mark of spirituality that an individual is inspired to introduce more harmony and order into, say, his office. But if he attains to a still deeper order of awareness he will almost certainly be moved to question the character of the office itself, which will probably prove on investigation to be accessory to some purposes of an unproductive, or even debased type. This is the root of one's objection to bourgeois morality: genuine virtues are exercised, but only within the limits of a situation which more spiritual minds would repudiate. And when the help of Christ is invoked by the religious to aid them in conducting in a spirit of sweetness and good will undertakings which are basically incompatible with Christian principles matters become still worse.

We all realise, of course,—unless we are dedicated to the



cause of violent revolution—that we cannot get down to absolutely radical considerations except by a slow process of moral growth. But it is nevertheless important that palliatives and compromises should be clearly recognized for what they are. The fact that music can help workers in a factory to perform their dreary tasks should not be allowed to blind us to the circumstance that the tasks themselves in most cases entail a violation of the natural organic rhythms of life and a degradation of the status of the workman, and that the factory itself is part of an unbalanced social system.

In the same way we must not take at its face value the paternalism of a concern which provides recreation grounds for its workers, for the gesture is made within the framework of the capital-labour system from which nothing really creative can be expected. And so on in all sorts of directions.

What is certain is that an increased appreciation both by the individual himself and by his fellows of what is striving for manifestation within each man and woman would completely transform the character of human society. At present our lives are determined principally from without. This or that system is established, its cog-wheels inexorably engage and revolve, and the individual adapts himself to it as best he can. Naturally it 'gets results'. But they are exceedingly crude, for the reason that what is achieved is no more than the outcome of a plan which has been imposed upon the people who execute it, instead of representing the synthesis of their individual original impulses.

The condition of true creativeness is that the potentialities of every individual shall be given full play, and that each should strive to discover at all costs what he is most deeply moved to do in the light of conscience, reason and experience, that his latent powers may truly be brought

into manifestation. This demands, of course, any amount of courage, suffering, adventure, experimentation and sacrifice; one's daemon is a severe master. And it calls also for a deeper and wider understanding of the problems of psychology.

Then in the second place every project should be conceived as involving the synthesis of concerted individual efforts. It will always, of course, fall to some to direct and plan. But such planning should more and more take the form of the orchestration of individual manifestations. And the character of such components of the whole can only be discerned and appreciated as the result of the cultivation of a deep order of human sympathy, going far beyond mere justice and 'consideration' and concern for 'welfare'.

We are thus met in the human realm with an equivalent to regionalism. Attention must be directed first and foremost to *points of origination*, which consist in this case of individuals whose sympathies, interests and capacities provide the creative power for the whole. The ideal is the concerted efforts of a unified body of people who have been awakened into full self-consciousness. For we cannot know what we should combine to do until each has been given a chance to display his or her true nature. Only when we are concerned with liberated personalities shall we gain any true picture of the enterprises which they would collectively undertake.

'It is only in voluntary association', wrote Wilde, 'that man is fine.' Here we have, although in a simple form, activity which is rooted in the personal sympathies and inclinations of the individual. One may say that any organization on this basis, even if it is inefficient, is at least, if I may use the expression, mystically sound, for the reason that it conforms to an absolutely basic spiritual structure—order proceeding from the spontaneous expression of the

interior nature of the units comprising it, an order which liberates life instead of constraining it.

Of course people may be in a state of considerable confusion with respect to their motives for joining a voluntary organization. After all, it is only the highly conscious and disciplined who have any really clear idea of what is good for them, or even of what they want. But the fact remains that if a person goes out of his way to associate himself with a certain work his impulse is more likely to be really creative than if he is compelled to it from outside by necessity or regulation. Further, it brings with it a strong emphasis upon responsibility. 'If you don't like the venture it is no good complaining, because you yourself elected to join it.' This opens the door to the best form of education, which is exercised in freedom and involves the direction of the enterprise from within.

Finally, voluntary association is usually bound up closely with a local complex of sights and sounds, friendships, memories and traditions. It thus emphasizes the organic at the expense of the abstract and invests such activities with a rich and living character. Even such a simple affair as a village cricket match serves to bring out the enormously vitalizing consequences of uniting men with one another and with nature in terms of freedom and order.

## 6. THE ARTIST AND SOCIETY

A word must be said here regarding the relation to society of that highly individualized type, the artist.\*

Primarily the artist creates out of sheer delight. And the public also study his works primarily for the sheer delight of the revelation which they provide of forms and rhythms

\* I have dealt with this question at greater length in my *Isis and Osiris*.

which he alone is able to detect and record. On the highest level we are concerned in this matter only with a process of pure contemplation, to which practical application is strictly subordinate. Yet for all this in many directions the artist becomes, incidentally to his higher purposes, a critic of society. For he brings into relief relations which escape a less discerning eye, emphasizes high possibilities which are denied manifestation in our existing civilization. He does not analyse or explain, but he *shows* us diverse embodiments of good and evil with compulsive clarity and force. He records the more subtle influences which are at work in nature and the world of human relationships, and if we neglect his testimony we shall gain no sure control over life.

Everything depends, however, on his adhering strictly to his function. And this applies particularly to the literary man in his relation to society. While he is content to depict and exhibit we cannot be too grateful for his contribution. But it is a different matter when he proceeds to philosophize or moralize respecting spiritual realities. He then only too often presents us with a combination of emotion, idealism, argumentation, eloquence and inaccuracy which has a dangerous effect, not only on the uninstructed, but on those who ought to be able to resist the spell. And in an age like our own in which metaphysical disciplines are deeply suspected such thinkers can confuse the issues for us in a serious fashion.

One must further remark that it is possible to come to still more close grips with that interior world of being to which the artist is aesthetically responding. From one point of view we may regard his vision as being only a preliminary registration of the activity of forces and powers which can be known with more immediacy, and therefore greater effect, by the student of the esoteric. But this deep and interesting theme I cannot pursue further here.

Finally, I would suggest that although art is essentially

individual—reality reflected through the prism of a unique personality—the artist's function may yet be destined to undergo a considerable change as the New Order comes into existence. Historically he has comprehensibly enough always tended to feel a deep hostility to the bourgeoisie. And this has inevitably driven him into isolation and bohemianism—a relation to society which is essentially uncreative. As, however, the significance of community life grows stronger we may find that he is impelled to a type of association with others which will enable him to exercise his individual function in a new mode: he will express in aesthetic and personalized terms, the inspiration of a smaller or larger group. This development is already taking place in Russia, although of course under the unrelenting pressure of a totalitarian dictatorship. Could it be manifested on a higher level and in terms of true freedom, we should be met with a modern expression of the spirit in which the mediaeval craftsman laboured in the building of the cathedrals, and art would again become organically related to life.

## 7. PATHS TO FREEDOM

If I have dealt at some length with the problem of the individual's personal relation to society, this is simply because for the religious thinker it provides the key to the whole wider situation. But it is now time to turn to the influence of religion as it is expressed in the realm of political theory and planning. What sort of social tendencies and reforms are most likely to win the support of the person who is making religion the basis of his life and philosophy?

With respect to the general character of the New Order I have nothing to say here, for the simple reason that the issues involved will be already familiar to any student of

these pages. We are all by now sufficiently aware that we must somehow restrict at all costs the power of the State, establish a proper balance between mechanism and agriculture, so shape our social organization that the different levels of economic political and spiritual life are no longer confused, put an end to the vicious alternation between characterless work and artificial and sensationalistic amusement between which the lives of the masses are today divided, make money our servant instead of our master, build up family life, get back much nearer to nature, develop decentralization, distribution\* and regionalism, bring the producer, the workman and the consumer into a proper relation. And so on.†

But such general aims and purposes are relatively easy to formulate and therefore present no serious difficulties to the reformer. Even the most unreflective people are capable of recognizing pretty easily the ingredients of the 'good life' when they are pointed out to them. We are made for freedom and happiness, and unless we are neurotic or perverted we all know in general terms what we need to complete and fulfil our personalities.

The path to these satisfactions is, however, a long and weary one, and if we are following it under a religious inspiration it involves us with numbers of somewhat subtle problems to which the ordinary reformer tends to be insensitive. What they entail in every case is respect for distinctively spiritual factors in the equation which are much more perplexing and difficult to define than those which lie on the surface of the situation.

Consider, for instance, the social role of the consumer. In so far as he is not concerned with absolute necessities, regarding the acceptance of which he has a very limited

\* For an account of the history and development of the Distributist Movement see Maisie Ward, *Gilbert Keith Chesterton*, 1944, Ch. XXVI.

† See *Appendix*.

choice, the whole character of society is to a great degree in his hands. We have still not fully awakened to the possibilities that are offered us in the direction of combining to realize our own interests against those who seek to exploit them—e.g., the American Consumers' Union, which, to the vexation of Big Business, reports on goods from the standpoint of the customer instead of from that of the advertizer; or again, attempts which are made to control on moral grounds the investment of capital in undesirable enterprises.

But it is not merely a question of self-protection. It will be obvious that the consumer in the widest sense of the term has the last word, not only in respect to the sale of vacuum cleaners, lawn mowers and tooth paste, but in relation to a vast range of cultural issues. The only radical answer to commercialism and propaganda in all sorts of fields is a determined refusal on the part of the bulk of the community to respond to such appeals. Informed public opinion could effectively kill the consumption of low-grade literature, aesthetically inferior products, vulgar films and radio performances, militarism, political demagoguery, and heaven knows what else by the manifestation of consistent apathy. The basic answer to a mass of corrupting influences is: we are not amused.

There will be no need to stress the fact that the boycott, provided that it is not employed, as it is by the syndicalists, as an instrument of aggression, is morally a perfectly defensible institution. We need not excuse ourselves for not cooperating with purposes which we deem to be undesirable. Our support is solicited day in and day out by every possible kind of enterprise, and we have perfect freedom to respond in accordance with our sympathies and principles.

It will be objected, of course, that all this amounts to nothing more than putting forward a plea for a wider

education. But there is, I suggest, more in it than that. For a great deal depends upon exactly *how* a situation is presented to the community. If a movement were started to make the population more 'consumer-conscious', and to awaken them to the enormous power which they possess in determining the character of production in every direction and on every level the consequences might well prove to be remarkable.

There is another important respect in which religion impels to a more inward relation to communal problems, and this in connection with the securing of 'results'. Social theorists are naturally prone to conceive of any collective enterprise in terms primarily of the objective to be attained. A 'job' is to be done, and this means such things as that the best use must be made of the talents available, individuality must be respected, and good will and indulgence displayed by all concerned. But the accent is unmistakably laid upon the objective and not on the people who are combining to realise it. Under a totalitarian regime this tendency is, of course, carried to an extreme: everything is measured in terms of material results. However many may suffer and even die on the way, all that matters is that the project shall be carried through.

Religion, on the contrary, makes for an exactly opposite emphasis: it pushes concern for the individual even further than do the exponents of democracy. And in thus going deeper it brings to light the more profound principle which democracy is maintaining in an attenuated form. For the religious thinker the individual is at once sacred, and the key to all general and social situations. Hence he must be given an extreme degree of freedom to discover his inner and more creative nature at the expense, not only of the plan in which he is playing a part, but of other individuals as well. In a word, the rule of love supplants the rule of force.



How far can we afford to go in sacrificing 'efficiency' to the satisfaction of this demand? Obviously certain disciplines are essential. But there seems to be little doubt that the nearer we draw to understanding the mystical significance of personality the more disposed we shall be to take the view that the object of physical existence is, not to 'get things done', but to provide souls with an opportunity for gaining what can best be described as 'self-realisation'.

But the condition of attaining to such 'self-realisation' is the freedom to exercise *and abuse* free-will; in other words, the reduction of constraint to a minimum. This means that mere tolerance has to pass into a willing acceptance of interference by others, so that they can be given an opportunity of finding themselves even if in the process they cause others great unhappiness. They may be warned, remonstrated with, exhorted—but not coerced. Self-correction attained to by permitted experimentation is deemed to be a more radical process than correction from outside. Compunction, the voluntary abandoning of a wrongful course of action, is to be prized far more highly than the exaction of mechanical obedience.

In almost all cases the mark of authentic love is that it is content to wait in silence rather than gain a merely external victory. In other words, the religious virtue of forgiveness is assigned an essential function in the creative process. This is the view of the modern educator who permits the 'difficult' child even to destroy property and hurt his comrades that he may thereby discover himself. And it is that also of the parents who accord to their children the fullest degree of liberty that is compatible with their safety, or of the wife who in her dealings with her husband relies on persuasion rather than on opposition.

For both parties this is the hardest way. For it imposes on the anti-social individual the burden of taking full responsibility for himself. And it imposes on those

associated with him the burden of passively suffering injuries rather than resorting to force, about which there is always a taint of sadism. But the rewards for all concerned are of a very precious order. For in each case the deepest springs of life are released.

## 8. THE WAY OF PEACE

I will conclude this chapter with some remarks on the application to social problems of the basic religious principle of pacifism. No teaching of religion could be more fundamental than the doctrine that hatred is utterly destructive and that the key to creativeness is love. When this principle is applied with extreme consistency we are confronted with the conception of 'non-resistance to evil'.

It will be plain that we meet with the problem of pacifism in a far wider field than that of a national military emergency. Even if through the grace of God there are no more full-scale wars we shall always have to reckon with all sorts of crises and disputes in which men will be called upon to choose between the way of violence and the way of peace. The problem is presented first and foremost to every man in his domestic circle, and it meets him in a more or less acute form at all sorts of points in his social life. He is always being called upon to choose between retaliation and forgiveness.

But it is essential in this matter to distinguish clearly between the conscious sentiments of the pacifist and his deeper state of mind. The fact that a man enthusiastically embraces a principle or attitude is far from indicating that he is identified with it in a really complete sense. And this is particularly true of people with extreme pacifist leanings, who tend to be sentimental idealists who have not really embodied in their personalities the beliefs which they are expressing. This neurotic disposition to anticipate in this

fashion one's actual moral achievements is well known to psychologists and fully justifies that distrust of the pacifist which is manifested by the average citizen. He feels obscurely that the individual has no real right to take the high line that he is following.

We need not here consider the different ways in which the immature pacifist betrays himself; one instance must suffice. It will be apparent that the principles of pacificism, if consistently followed, forbid any possibility of aggressiveness to one's opponent. The only path which remains open to the thinker who takes his stand upon the power of love to subdue all opposition is that of patient persuasion, or even in many cases silence. Yet we find in many quarters the cause of pacifism being expounded with a violence and bitterness which completely contradicts this principle. The dove of peace proves to be equipped with the beak and claws of the eagle—and we draw our conclusions accordingly.

With all this we still have to reckon with the case for pacificism as it is represented by those who have a full right to advance its claims. And to the religious mind particularly it is extremely powerful. But the appeal which it makes can only be appreciated if certain considerations are kept clearly in mind. First of all, it should be emphasized that the term usually applied to the pacifist attitude—non-resistance—is singularly misleading. For the true pacifist, although his relation to an aggressor is entirely negative in so far as retaliation is concerned, is at the same time extremely positive on the spiritual plane. That is to say, he knows himself to be the instrument of a Power which must in the end triumph over evil for the reason that it never descends to meeting that evil on its own level. By refraining from placing himself in circuit with the disruptive forces at work in the world he at one and the same time maintains his inner association with the realm of Light and

Love and creates a situation in which evil can only return upon itself to its own ultimate destruction, however much damage it may do before that point is reached.

It is important to realise that our understanding of the enormous potential power of pacifism is greatly weakened by the fact that we have at present no kind of picture of what would happen if it were practised on a wide scale. We know very well what is entailed when an end is put to hostilities by force of arms. The result is a condition of affairs in which the victor suffers almost equally with the vanquished, in which desolation is caused on an enormous scale, and in which spiritually the original situation remains unchanged because love, which alone could alter it radically, has not come into the story. But the power that would be released by a widespread manifestation of faith in the Light, instead of faith in weapons of destruction, would be almost incalculable. For such an unqualified alignment with the Divine Power would inevitably liberate forces of the greatest potency which could not in the end be resisted.

True, the first stages of this sublime process would almost certainly involve martyrdom for many, but probably no more casualties than those involved in ordinary warfare. And here it is important to remember that not all those who use force are on the Nazi level of savagery. Extreme cases apart, there will always be many situations in which the exercise of pacifism will not entail destruction. There are great possibilities here in the direction of the collective outlawing of offenders. From this point of view UNO should be provided, not with 'teeth', but with the power which is implied in the corporate exclusion of a wrong-doer. For, as I have suggested earlier, if we simply abstain from aiding the purposes of evil we are on sure moral ground.

Another point of importance is that the consistent pacifist is not entangled in all those casuistries and sophis-

tries which have to be resorted to by those who are trying to hold fast to an ideal in one direction and repudiate it in another. The less resolute thinker in this field is confronted with the awkward problem of deciding where exactly to draw the line, when to practise forbearance and when to resort to force. He is fully aware, for instance, that the only way that domestic problems can be radically solved is by the path of love, and this even if it takes a lifetime to work the problem out. But in respect of certain other issues he feels that compulsion is the only solution.

He is further disturbed by the implications of his position as a citizen of a state. What does he *really* owe to this particular institution? It has afforded him certain privileges. But it has also perpetrated all sorts of evils against which he is impelled to protest. If he is an intelligent man he is likely to be more against it than for it, and in any case his association with it is almost entirely involuntary; he has practically no choice but to live and work where he is.

All sorts of similar intellectual puzzles might be instanced. It is, I think, unprofitable to review them here for the reason that the ability to weigh correctly the issues involved depends primarily, not upon mental acuteness, but upon inner purity of being. They are, therefore, as many recognise, better left alone, although one must insist on the fact that if the spirit has been properly disciplined the mind will perceive clearly where in each instance the truth lies. The only safe course is to stick to fundamentals and leave the unravelling of the finer points until the vision has cleared. What is certain, at least, is that all this analysis and ratiocination makes for continual uncertainty and distress, and reveals decisively that one has not got down to the root of the matter.

Still worse is the situation of the person who is consciously religious. For there can be *no* ambiguity about the teachings on this point of the great masters of the spiritual life.

'Hatred ceaseth only by love'—in these words are contained the whole of the doctrine. Whatever the legitimate claims of Cæsar, there can be no doubt that at the time when a person is making use of weapons of destruction and death he cannot claim to be an instrument of the God of Love. To the degree that he resorts to force in dealing with his fellow men he has fallen outside the realm of the Divine Activity. Nothing is more nauseating than the hypocritical attempts of certain Christian apologists to provide ingenious devices for evading this fundamental situation.

All talk about 'predicaments' and 'dilemmas' is treachery to their Master. The conscientious pacifist has no 'dilemma.' What he is called upon to face is not a problem in casuistry, but the simple fact of his own human weakness. If he fails to follow the heroic line, this is quite simply because he has not the spiritual fortitude to do so. The testimony of his conscience is clear enough. But if we are realists we recognise that only very few are capable of taking the path of the Light in an unqualified sense, and no-one will judge the majority for their failure to do so. The essential point is that the whole issue becomes confused if we fail to distinguish between this psychological problem and the theological problem of the rightness of pacifist behaviour.

In view of all this it should be clear that it is only the individual who can decide whether or not he should follow the pacifist path, and if so, to what degree. None should be condemned either for their pacifism, or for their adherence to an alternative philosophy. In a civilized community people exercise the most diverse functions. Some are called upon to work out to the full the implications of traditional principles, some to stand as far as possible aside, some to follow a pioneer path the full significance of which will become apparent only to subsequent generations.

In any case, the authentic deliverances of 'conscience'

in respect of any issue are not to be challenged by the State, for they may point towards a higher good than that which the State embodies or supports. No man who believes in Providence will venture to judge anyone who is evidently seeking in his own way to promote the good of society, for only the Gods understand the devious path by which society is being led out of darkness into light. The pacifist, provided that he is sincere, must be allowed to play his part along with everyone else.

## *Chapter Eight*

### THE COMING OF COMMUNITY

OF all the tendencies which are at work today in transforming the character of our modern civilization none is of greater significance, or more directly expressive of a religious inspiration, than our concern to develop group and community life.

What this movement unmistakably spells is the end of individualism in its uncreative sense and the first beginnings of a far more creative conception of human society. For it offers us the possibility of preserving the best features in our present largely individualistic culture while associating them with others which make for a more complete order of life. This because the new structure which is emerging is that of the individual-in-the-whole, neither element, as will appear, being affirmed at the expense of the other.

No sharp distinction can be drawn between experiments in community and progressive developments in the direction of such things as the revival of crafts, homesteading, distributism, and the like. All these movements are closely intertwined.

In the present chapter my concern is exclusively with the particular problems which arise when association is extended beyond the bounds of a single family to include other families and individuals as well. It will be found that such groupings are rarely pursued for their own sake, but almost always involve the pursuit of idealistic aims.



## I. THE END OF INDIVIDUALISM

There will be no need to emphasize the immense importance of the individualistic phase of European thought. It was inevitable that at a certain moment of history men should arise and throw off the bondage imposed upon them by civil and ecclesiastical authority and affirm their right to think and act for themselves. But since this impulse was not balanced by submission to something still higher—the will of God—the liberties which were so gloriously gained became fatally abused, with the final result that we today find ourselves living in an acquisitive society in which the profit motive is dominant and political unity almost completely lost.

Further, the same atomizing tendency naturally became manifested in the realm of culture. Those members of society who enjoyed any degree of leisure tended to amass cultural possessions which were closely equivalent to the 'private fortunes' amassed in the economic sphere by the capitalists. There are, of course, all sorts of directions in which the cultivated unite for common purposes, as in learned societies and the like. But until very recent years the outstanding feature of our culture was that the individual selected out of the vast complex of material available to him in this field just what he thought would suit his particular individualistic purposes. At the highest this meant that he was choosing with responsibility and care that spiritual nourishment which his soul needed. At the lowest it meant that he was gratifying his idle curiosity or seeking superficial diversion by exploiting at random the possibilities offered by the cinema, radio, and the fiction department of the local library. In any case all these influences were brought to a focus on one point—his own personality considered primarily in terms of separateness.

From one point of view all this was of course admirable.

For unless we accept the totalitarian principle that the argument is only allowed to lead as far as the Party permits, we are bound to work on the democratic assumption that each must discriminate, judge and evaluate for himself. Otherwise all true spiritual life is stifled and thwarted. But it is evident also that the cultivation of intellectual independence at the expense of other qualities to balance it cannot but lead to serious dangers. The mark of the over-educated person is that he is concerned to an excessive degree with criticism, appraisal and analysis. Almost everything is for him equally 'interesting', and since he spends most of his time in studying the production of more vital personalities he tends towards spiritual parasitism. His education is 'liberal', not only in a good sense, but in the sense also that his knowledge is acquired and imparted in, as it were, the abstract and not in conjunction with limited purposes deriving from associations into which he has entered. The psychology of this type is that of the free-lance, the sensitive and discerning 'observer' who contemplates the scene with sceptical attention, the purveyor of *choses vues*, the novelist who explores this or that theme because it has captured his imagination and irrespective of his relation to it in more fundamental terms.

There is evidently a close correspondence between that independence of the functional and organic which is enjoyed in the cultural realm and that which is enjoyed in the economic realm by the manipulator of money. In both cases it is a question of establishing an arbitrary and abstract relation with the object in independence of other obligations and ties. From this point of view there is not much difference between intervening in the local situation from the outside by purchasing a farm house and arriving as a stranger to paint it or write it up. Both processes involve an activity of a random and casual type and a denial of the claims of the organic.

In the cultural realm at least, there is, of course, plenty of room for such adventures—if only on the grounds of the powerful and stimulating effects of novelty on the mind. But the point is that such centrifugal tendencies are in the present epoch insufficiently balanced by others of a centripetal order, binding the individual in various limiting associations, localizing his attention in a salutary sense, bringing appreciation into relation with true creation, linking cultural satisfaction with responsibility and common endeavour.

I have already called attention elsewhere in this essay to the fact that a tendency towards an undue emphasis on the individual was also manifested in other fields of thought as well. In the politico-legal sphere society was conceived of as an aggregate of units each represented by a citizen who had certain 'rights' and 'obligations', who entered into different types of relationship in the course of his passage through life. In fact the individual played in the world a very similar role to the hard, impenetrable and separated atoms of Daltonian chemistry,\* and as such he was regarded until very recently by lawyers, economists, moralists, and even philosophers. And even in the realms of religion he was still thought of in terms of separation. As noted earlier, individualism received a heavy accentuation through an extreme, and often morbid, search for personal 'salvation'. Charity was interpreted as a transaction between the beneficent and the 'objects' of their kindness. Although people were enjoined to love their neighbours, such association was thought of as being more casual than otherwise; the mystical conception of an *ecclesia* had been almost entirely lost, and the communism

\* We are only beginning to realise the degree to which political ideas have been determined in the past by purely philosophical principles. See, for instance, Professor F. S. C. Northrop's interesting account in his *Meeting of East and West* (1946) of the powerful influence exerted in the realm of social theory by Locke's conception of mental substances.

of the early church was regarded as being for all intents and purposes utopian.

One must observe also that the very exercise of freedom leads men in certain directions to perceive the self-defeating quality of liberalistic 'self-expression'. It was characteristic of the liberalism of the past era, for instance, that the multiplication of schools of thought, standpoints and theories was regarded as an encouraging manifestation and a cultural achievement. Personality was evidently being accorded untrammelled expression and one of the fundamental rights of man, that of free speech and assembly, was being exercised unimpeded. The Czechoslovaks, for instance, naïvely prided themselves on having more newspapers and political parties per head of population than any other country in Europe. But even before they found themselves within the sphere of Russian influence they were beginning to think differently. For although extreme diversity in this field implies freedom, it also reveals a disastrous inability or disinclination to sink differences in unity. Something is evidently called for between unrestrained fissiparousness and totalitarian monotony, and this is the problem to which they are now trying to find a solution.

So it is in all fields of creation. One cannot but feel that any individual quest which is sincerely pursued will lead eventually to some form of reconciliation with others. Either the attempt at 'personal expression' will be abandoned as being immature, irrelevant or egoistic (cf., the silly attempts at novel writing made by hundreds of superficial people today), or the truth-seeker will move forward to membership of a group in which manifestation will be collective. The very 'sensitiveness' which constitutes the claim of the average individualist to a hearing is usually largely the outcome of his wrongful isolation and withdrawal. With closer association with others his conscious-

ness would change for the better, even though superficially it became less 'interesting'.

Hence, however disappointing the majority of symposia, group manifestoes and other communal declarations may be, we must welcome them—provided, of course, that they are not products of mere mass psychology—on account of their significance for the future. For power today is focalized more and more by those who have dedicated themselves to concerted activity and expression.

Both in geographical and human terms the group supplies those elements in experience which are necessary in order to balance the tendencies, valuable in themselves, but dangerous in isolation, which are fostered by a self-indulgent individualism. In communal association the person not only becomes more 'himself' than he was before, but he develops sides of his nature which can be brought into manifestation only in such a wider environment.

## 2. FROM THE FAMILY TO THE COMMUNITY

Of course practically nobody lives an entirely isolated life. For the majority in any case an absolutely basic pattern of social association is provided by the family, the fundamental biological unit. Yet in spite of the tremendous function which it exercises in building up the personality we must be cautious against adopting that somewhat uncritical attitude towards it which is manifested by so many sociologists today. It is essential to discover just what possibilities it offers, and does not offer, us in the present age of transition from individualistic to communitarian life.

The family is essentially a primitive institution, the most ancient and radical institution in the world. But all institutions, that of the family included, are subject to evolution. In this epoch particularly the rhythms are rapidly

changing, and this means that even the man-woman-child relationship is acquiring for us a different significance.

The family constellation is primarily biological. There are those who regard it as being fundamentally spiritual in character, and who see in it the very symbol of divine association. But this is a view which one cannot accept without certain reservations. In the first place one must venture to make the assertion that children are *not* the direct expression of love. Love between the opposite sexes is usually, but of course not necessarily, associated with a process of biological generation which does not directly express the spiritual relation between them. All one can say is that if as a result of sympathy, which is primarily of the spirit, they are swept into the stream of animal life, then children may appear as a result. But their physical birth is the effect of the activity of Nature. It is not in itself an expression of the parents' love for one another, but of the fact that such love has found expression through physical bodies. As to the child's soul, if we are religious we can only believe that it comes from God and becomes the animating principle of a biological organism. To think otherwise would be to embrace that doctrine of Traducianism, rightly condemned by the doctors of the Church, which teaches that the soul as well as the body of the offspring has been generated by the parents.

All this is, of course, only an argument against a narrow biological possessiveness. The other side of the picture is that the parents, and particularly the mother, embody and express a spiritual principle of protection and guardianship which is divine in its origin and character.

But this only when they are capable of exercising this high function. For we all know from experience that there is no *essential* spiritual link, either between the parents, or between them and their children. A boy may appear in a family who, in spite of the biological heritage which he

shares with his brothers and sisters, is inwardly remote from them as well as from the parents who are supposed to have 'begotten' him. And this cannot but impel us, if we are not materialists, to conclude that there are spiritual lines of heredity which may or may not coincide with physical lines of descent. And this means that the true family consists of those who are associated, not in terms of their biological origin, but in terms of their spiritual affiliations—a deep and interesting question into which I cannot enter here.

What it comes to, therefore, is that the family is spiritually important in so far as it provides a supreme opportunity for learning life's most fundamental lesson—that of brotherly love. This lesson can only be learned in really searching terms in a small group of people who are in permanent association, and this is exactly what the family provides. Moreover, just because it so often consists of individuals who are *not* initially in harmonious terms with one another—as a result of what the esotericist would describe as the operation of the Law of Karma—this education is imposed in its most intense and challenging form. And right behind the whole tangled situation is the dark mystery of the Fall.

As remarked above, the family is without doubt the fundamental biological unit. As against strangers, enemies and governments at least, its members are unified, often to an extreme degree, by common allegiances, interests, traditions and sympathies. But all this has little to do with the spiritual. All one can say is that if spiritual links are included in the complex the intimacy of family life will provide a most valuable opportunity of enriching them. But that is all.

The conclusion to which we are therefore driven is that the family is the first, the natural, and the most difficult school of love. Further, it is plain that spiritual growth

involves a gradual expansion of this sphere of affection, extending outwards to the community and the nation and culminating ultimately in the acceptance of that sublime principle expressed in the Chinese adage, 'One Family under Heaven'. The remote end of the journey is represented by a Christlike state of all-inclusive love.

Apart from this we have to reckon with the fact that there are processes at work in the world today tending to break down, and in a creative sense, that extremely intimate association between biology and sympathy which we have inherited from our ancestors. The modern revolt against excessive domesticity is not merely an expression of the disintegration of traditional morality. Men and women everywhere are awakening to the reality of those spiritual affinities of which I have spoken above, and which are disclosing themselves more and more insistently with our increased response, decade by decade, to the *inner* relationships in which we all stand to one another. Conventional bourgeois morality is becoming increasingly intolerable to the degree that people are coming to realise that they are primarily a society of spirits and not primarily associated in terms of biological groupings. All this may make at first for terrible unhappiness, irresponsibility and disorder, but who can fail to see that it involves a movement towards a higher type of human society?

As to the next stage, it is evident that no extension of sympathy is really creative unless it involves the element of the organic—a common purpose, mutual responsibility, shared experience and persistent association. Bohemianism and uncoordinated 'elective affinities' provide no real answer to the problem, and still less is it provided by a superficial cosmopolitanism or by devotion to romantic and abstract causes. Every developed individual will naturally respond emotionally to the remote as well as to the immediate, and there are some whose very life consists in



cooperation with people of other races and creeds. But fundamentally the principle holds good that we can only grow spiritually in any deep sense if we begin with those with whom we are closely associated, and move from that point outwards.

This means that the next stage to the family complex is the community, a group of people who have taken responsibility for one another and who in extreme cases are living together permanently in the same place. That interdependence, cooperation and mutual tolerance which is manifested first of all in healthy family life are now exercised in the next wider realm, that of communal association. And, as will be evident, both the burden on the individual and the resources at his disposal are increased commensurately. The whole weight and power of this larger and more complex organism can be directed either against him or to his advantage. Ostracism becomes more agonizing and acclamation more exhilarating. His life is determined by a more comprehensive whole and he prospers or suffers accordingly.

So far we have been considering the situation exclusively from the spiritual point of view. But we can look at it also from a more terrestrial and economic standpoint. It is true enough that family life falls naturally into a fundamental pattern: father, mother and offspring. But one must not lose sight of the fact that the firmly integrated unit which is thus brought into existence tends in most cases to separate itself from other units of the same type. Sympathy is concentrated in a narrow circle at the cost of isolation from the wider community. This was the pattern of all savage societies—loyalty to the tribe combined with hostility to strangers—and in spite of the humanizing effect of civilized institutions it is perpetuated even down to the present age. What is a row of 'detached' (significant term) suburban houses but a symbol of this condition of mind?

Only in the supreme emergency of war is this separative tendency overcome, and then only partly and for a season. Communal life is organized, not on a pattern laid up in Heaven, but on one shaped and applied by enterprising estate agents, who have a shrewd appreciation of the separative tendencies which are implanted deeply in the soul of every rate-payer.

So is it also with the individual's relation to the State. The present time is one of challenging emergencies. All sorts of problems in the realm of food, housing and employment must be resolutely attacked if the outcome is not to be disaster. This means that a multitude of sacrifices are being demanded from the citizens, and that he is subjected to all manner of inconveniences and discomforts. At the same time appeals are made to his humanity and generosity and he is asked to make appropriate contributions to the national, and even to the international cause.

Naturally such exhortations for the most part fall flat. The immediate—our baby, house, garden and car—prevails over the remote—the welfare of the nation. Men will not make great sacrifices for what is relatively an abstraction. The planners, we may be certain, will impose their projects on the community against a deepening psychological resistance. For no superior principle is invoked which could raise the situation to a higher plane. Moreover, sacrifice is demanded of people almost entirely in relation to situations which they know of only at second hand. So only the sentimental and romantic will expect any great achievement as a result.

What all this points to is sufficiently clear. Our hope for the future lies in community life under a religious inspiration. Men's sympathy must be drawn out, not in the direction of remote and general considerations, but in relation to what lies immediately about them. They must be induced to extend beyond the domestic family into a

wider family constituted by the local community. Since they are not saints they must be given an opportunity of investing their spare energy and resources in undertakings which will bring them a personal reward in a direct and comprehensible fashion. They must be given a voice in creating an immediate environment from which they can directly benefit. One may affirm without cynicism that at the present stage of human evolution men cannot be expected to give on any large scale without some substantial prospect of a reward.\*

All this is, of course, only the negative aspect of the problem. It is not simply that people must be provided with a substantial inducement to contribute to the common good, but that the local organic unit is spiritually the proper form of human association. Life unfolds its full potentialities only within some type of restricted field. We are impelled to reject centralization, long-distance transactions, absentee-landlordism, impersonal financial operations and all the rest of it basically because they violate the radical principle that the threads of life are drawn into a creative pattern only at definite times and places.

Of this fact the great mass of the people have a profound and instinctive realisation. They know well enough that what threatens life most acutely is impersonality and abstraction. It is not for nothing that that dynamic character of American Folklore, Slappy Hooper, "the world's biggest, fastest and bestest sign painter", seeks wherever possible to "stay off public works." For "it is the pride of many independent craftsmen and boomers that they have never been chained to a job on 'public works', i.e., in a large factory where a time clock is punched and

\* "Goethe said that the chief reason for Napoleon's extraordinary personal influence was that under him men were sure of attaining their object. . . . No one serves another disinterestedly, but he does it willingly if he knows that he can thus serve himself." L. L. Whyte, *The Next Development in Man*, 1944, p. 245.

the routine is deadening. To the freelancing artisans, going on 'public works' is a fate worse than death."\*

### 3. THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE GROUP

Everything points, then, to the fact that life in community not only brings out and harmonizes the different sides of a man's nature, but is an institution towards which we are unmistakably moving. It is important, therefore, that we should now make an attempt to understand the essential principles which it involves. These can, of course, only be brought out by considering the group in its most pure and characteristic form. The varieties of communitarian organization will occupy our attention later.

It will be plain that the group is a widely different phenomenon from the crowd, the mark of which is that individual reactions are obliterated by mass response. The crowd blindly assembles, cheers, execrates, destroys, disperses without responsibility or rationally considered purpose. And the situation as a result falls beneath the true human level. Nor has the group any real connection with the throng, which, although unorganized, is usually harmless.

Again, if we consider less casual and more permanent association, a true group is something different from a body of people who have the same ideas and sympathies only because they are carrying out a programme hypnotically imposed upon them by a magnetic leader or a political party. Nor is group association mere gregariousness. For to be gregarious is to seek satisfaction on the most simple and primitive level of existence, to derive psychological support from the elementary fact that one is in the company of one's fellow men. This is certainly a necessary *condition*

\* *The American People*, 1946, p. 220n.

of the existence of a group, but community in the proper sense of the term is achieved only when a much higher element of consciousness has been introduced into the equation.

What decisively distinguishes the group from these more rudimentary forms of association is the fact that it preserves, and even enhances, the individuality of each while blending all into a unity which is on a higher plane than any could attain to alone. Each remains himself, while yet making his contribution to the whole, and at the same time being conditioned by that whole. In a word, the isolated individual is an abstraction; the truth is that every man and woman is *constituted* by the relations into which he enters in different directions. Throughout his life he is maintaining and experiencing all sorts of relationships in which he is modifying both himself and those with whom he is in association. Many of them are, of course, casual, transient or insignificant. But when a number of people unite to form a stable and relatively permanent complex we meet with the phenomenon of the group properly so-called. And the more intensive their association, the more clearly is the distinctive character of group life brought out.

The relation between the members of a group can properly be described as 'organic'. It is true that technically speaking the term should be applied only to those parts of living wholes which have no proper function outside them—such as the liver in the human body. Whereas a person remains a person in a minimal sense at least whether he joins a group or not. Nevertheless, the outstanding fact about people who are in association is that the behaviour of each one is being determined all the time to different degrees by the behaviour of each of the others. And this means that their group activities are organic in character.

That we are here concerned with a principle which is at the same time evasive, powerful and essentially mystical is

indicated by the marked difficulty of finding appropriate images to convey its nature. For at its root lies the infinite mystery of love, expressed for ever in the overcoming and yet preservation of distinction in unity. It is a question of clutching at any words which can aid us in our embarrassment: William James' 'compenetration', inclusiveness, togetherness, collectivism, symbiosis, solidarity, interfusion, interpenetration. We can see the idea we are wrestling with expressed on the theological plane in the term 'circumincession', which is defined as 'the perfect mutual penetration of the three persons of the Trinity'. And finally we have a most interesting Russian conception of which much is made in Orthodox theology: '*sobornost*',\* the nearest English equivalent to which is 'conciliarity' (French, *conciliarité*). It means exactly what we are here concerned with, and I imagine that Miss M. P. Follett would have jumped at it had it come across her path.

The mark of the idea which we are considering is that you cannot just 'get' it by a sudden act of mental appropriation, as when one in a flash sees a proof in mathematics, or penetrates to the secret of the zip fastener. Like all conceptions of this order, it grows quietly and subtly in depth and richness as we meditate upon it. For at its foundation is a principle which is infinite, and which can never be fully compassed by the human mind.

However, those people who, rightly or wrongly, distrust metaphysics and transcendentalism can do much with it by taking it on a purely pragmatic or psychological basis (as Miss Follett was disposed to herself). The essential thing is to realise that the traditional individualistic approach to experience has to be abandoned and that we must learn to think in terms of different orders of wholes.

One of the consequences of this emphasis upon the organic will be the placing of organization upon a more

\* Not, significantly enough, to be found in modern Soviet dictionaries!

spiritual basis than that of the majority vote. Instead of the deciding factor being mere numerical preponderance it will be response to inspired leadership. The group will voluntarily commit itself to the guidance of one or more of their number in whose wisdom they have faith, and whose illumination depends in a large measure on the love and sympathy which they receive from the rest. The principle involved is deeply mystical. But unfortunately space does not permit an examination of this very interesting problem here.

#### 4. FELLOWSHIP AND ARISTOCRACY

In awakening to the meaning of community life we should not lose sight of the fact that it will have little significance unless it embodies fully the principle of individuality. This raises for us a number of important problems which we must examine carefully before we proceed further.

It is not difficult to perceive that our increasing interest in community is but one aspect of our general tendency to react from the abuse of abstract thought. Most of our present troubles derive from the fact that our culture is to a marked degree the product of the masculine genius. This means that our attitude to life has been distorted by an excessive emphasis upon theoretical, doctrinaire and mechanical thinking. Sympathy, imagination and intuition have been sacrificed to analysis, science and speculation, and we have become spiritually impoverished and devitalized as a result.

This masculine accent has made inescapably for power-seeking and egoism; for it is essentially the male within us all who is bent on acquisition, who is separative in his instincts, who expresses the spirit of individualism in its uncreative aspect. And we have already noted that the

masculine lust for power finds in the equally masculine achievement of technics the perfect instrument for its purposes. Between egoism and mechanistic thinking there is an association which is too obvious to call for emphasis.

But this domination of the heart by the head is now at last calling forth a feminine protest. The claims of feeling, instinct, and sympathetic identification with one's fellow men are being more and more energetically advanced in an attempt to redress the balance. Feminism has now passed out of its first phase, which was marked by the vindication of women's 'rights', and now finds expression in the affirmation of the feminine *principle*. This is as salutary as it is inevitable. Admittedly it will mean embarrassment and even a certain amount of humiliation for the self-satisfied male; but he has unquestionably 'asked for it'. The sequel to centuries of masculine thinking can only be a compensatory stress upon those values to which women (or the woman in man) are particularly sensitive. After three centuries of science we need desperately to be awakened to the significance of another and—one must venture to affirm—a deeper and more interior way of knowing and acting that is of the heart.

A proper realisation of this fact should impel one to tolerance and leniency when confronted with the early manifestations of what may be described as 'soul values'. We are still only in the very first stages of the fight. Science and planning are likely to dominate the scene for many years to come. Feminism in its *spiritual* aspect is at present only in about the same stage of development as that to which science had attained at, say, the beginning of the seventeenth century. The science of communion and 'relationship' is yet in its infancy. We know as little about 'getting together' in communal terms as the original members of the Royal Society did about molecular physics. Pioneer sociologists like Miss Follett (whose insight is essentially



feminine in character) stand in the same relation to their age as Boyle did to his contemporaries. The only difference is that whereas the early scientists had very little to build upon except the primitive science of the Arabs and the Greeks we at least have a mass of traditional spiritual wisdom which it is open to us to reinterpret in terms of the character of our age. In all this, of course, I am thinking of Western Europe and not of the momentous and sinister experiment which is at present being made in Russia.

The first phase of adjustment will almost certainly involve the usual passage to the opposite extreme. In revolting from the use of abstract thinking we expose ourselves to the danger of becoming lost in a forest of indiscriminating personal relationships. And from this point of view we must take careful account of the influence which is today being exercised in religious and philosophical circles by the thought of the Jewish philosopher, Martin Buber. There can be no doubt that his vindication of the mystical I-Thou relation between the self and the external objects (both animate and inanimate) to which it finds itself related is of considerable importance in an age in which we are in the most serious danger of becoming dominated by the abstract realm of the 'it'. It is evident that he has worked out this theme with impressive profundity and revealed to us all the significance of that communion with the object which is necessarily left entirely out of account in the scientific scheme and even unduly neglected by philosophers.

Nevertheless, in studying his pages one cannot escape the impression that he has given us an incomplete account of the situation in which we find ourselves in respect of the outer universe. In the first place there would seem to be an insufficient emphasis (surprising in the case of a Jewish thinker) on the fact that the *primary* relation is not I-Thou, but I-God, the point being that on the principles of a sound theology it is only by virtue of the relation both of myself

and the other to the Divine that the I-Thou relationship can be entered into at all.

Again, Buber is undoubtedly justified in pointing to the fundamental denial of life involved in treating the object as a mere 'thing', as an 'it' which is coldly observed, or positively exploited by a detached 'observer' of its nature. But in doing so he opens the door to the possibility of an unhealthy absorption in our purely *qualitative* relation to it. That is to say, our sense of its uniqueness and of its mystical and ineffable relation to ourselves threatens to prevail over the equally fundamental realisation that its objectivity has a cosmic function in compelling us to submit our emotional responses to the great objective scheme of things through which alone they can properly find expression.

In other words, like so many mystical thinkers, Buber strikes a note of undue subjectivism. Deeply aware of the depth of spiritual experience involved in direct communion with other beings, he is perilously indifferent to the Order in which they have their divinely appointed place. 'Only *It* can be arranged in order.' 'Only as *It* can (life) enter the structure of knowledge.' And so on. Now all this is legitimate and helpful enough in so far as we are concerned with human schemes which are *arbitrarily* imposed upon Nature by the calculating intellect alone. But we have also to reckon with the grand organic scheme of cosmic life to which we are called upon to submit, to the objective element in our experience, *not* in so far as it appears as the false separation of Thou from I, but in so far as it appears as the complementary principle to that which governs our mystical transactions with the people and things around us.

Here again one is somewhat surprised that a Jewish philosopher should betray such indifference to the great system of creation. In any case it would seem to be evident that although he has made a most valuable contribution to

contemporary thought, he has left us standing halfway along the road. For his thesis urgently calls for completion, and this by a reconciliation of the subjective and objective factors in our experience.

Clearly it is essential that they should be synthesized. Plato and his followers were acutely conscious of the tremendous function of the order of nature in regulating man's emotional processes. Mathematics, music, painting and sculpture disciplined the soul by compelling it to respect an order which had its origin in the Divine Mind. True, this was only one half of a complete story; for with the 'failure of nerve' which ensued men awoke to the meaning of 'sin' and the consequent necessity for achieving a correspondingly secure relation to the Reality within. Nevertheless, this reverence for cosmic law is the obvious corrective of that emotional and mystical attitude towards the object which is fostered by Buber's Neo-Chassidism. For even when the terrible realities of the subjective life have been properly faced the Platonic tradition still continues to make its powerful claims upon us. And its relation to the mystical and personalistic element in experience can be easily perceived. The essential fact about our relation to the people and objects in the world is love; nothing else. So far the mystics are right. But—and here we must show due respect to those who are responsive primarily to the cosmic aspect of knowledge—love can be imparted and received only by unqualified submission to the rigorous demands of form.

The obvious structure of our knowledge is I-It-Thou. In other words the world is so designed that consciousnesses communicate with one another naturally through the medium of objects. This undoubtedly involves the principle, so rightly emphasized by Buber, that the fate of nature is to be personalized, redeemed from its materiality by being subjectivized. But at the same time this process entails an

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unqualified acceptance of the great system of Nature (by which I mean something far wider than 'the universe of science') which is at once a means of liberating the impulses within us and a check upon our native emotionality, with its constant threat to diffuse our being in the realms of the formless or to subject us hypnotically to what is immediately before us.

What it comes to quite simply is that that subjective and essentially *feminine* principle on which Buber lays such an emphasis must be balanced and checked by the operation of the stern *masculine* principle of Form. There must be mystical communion with the essential nature of all other beings. But it can be safely achieved only by submission to the severe demands of objectivity. Love must be passed through *things*. And only in such terms can it remain healthy and sweet. 'It exists only through being bounded by others.' This is perfectly true. But there is a fundamental distinction between *separation*, in the sense that it violates an essential mystical unity, and *distinctness*, which is an expression in our space-time world of the fulness of Reality and a veritable means for our spiritual liberation. It is *only* through the bounded that man can realise and express the Infinite, as every artist knows—and few mystics admit.

The application of this subjective-objective principle to community life presents no serious difficulty. The danger implicit in the cultivation of the I-Thou relationship is evidently an excessive absorption in soul communion at the expense of the acknowledgement of the external conditions within which it has to be achieved—at least as long as one is living in the world of space and time. *Egoïsme à deux*, an overcharging of the psychic atmosphere, a morbid intensification of the emotional transactions between individuals, the undue localization of sympathy, the abuse of that faculty which enables us to 'see Eternity in a grain of sand'—such are some of the consequences of becoming

beguiled by mystical inwardness without a corresponding respect for the outward forms of communal existence. A fraternity can only safely be thought of, not only as a 'community of souls', but as a 'little world', with all the disciplines and obligations which living in a world, however small, entails.

What mystics as a class shrink from facing is that in the cosmic order as we at present know it subject and object have equal claims upon us, and that it is only when inwardness and outwardness are both duly acknowledged that the Real is disclosed to us.

In seeking to see this problem in a better perspective we naturally turn to our modern psychologists for help. But we soon discover that they can be of only limited assistance to us. Their job, of course, is to adjust the afflicted individual to 'reality'. Theoretically, this should endow him, not only with a wholesome respect for objective facts, but also with a capacity for 'achieving relation' (unlovely phrase). And since they are fully alive to the fact that the future of society depends directly upon our success in learning the great lessons of cooperation and fellowship, they are deeply concerned to educate people along these lines. But at the same time we are bound to enquire whether their conception of community is sufficiently subtle and comprehensive to satisfy our minds. In the first place one cannot help suspecting that they have an inclination to favour the sociable type of individual at the expense of the person whose tendency is towards introversion and solitude. The reason for this is not far to seek. It would seem that in this country at least neuroticism expresses itself most characteristically in some form of *frustration*. There are, of course, a minority whose failure to 'achieve relation' finds expression in an anti-social egoistical exhibitionism. But—particularly with respect to the problem of community life—the principal difficulty would seem to be that of bringing the individual 'out'.

Reliable information on this point is of course very difficult to obtain, but enquiries amongst psychologists suggest that it is here that the trouble usually lies. So it is natural that they should be particularly sensitive to its importance and tend to stress the necessity for social adaptation to an extreme degree.

The danger of over-emphasis in this respect is accentuated by the fact that as a result of their training the majority of our psychologists are working on a philosophy of a 'this world' type. They look with deep suspicion at anything suggesting transcendentalism, asceticism, aloofness, aristocracy, Platonism, self-imposed austerity. They are, in fact, constantly tempted to confound the biological with the spiritual, and to mistake mere gregariousness for love. Their sovereign aim is to adapt the individual to society, but in so doing they conceive of 'society' in what to the spiritually-minded appears to be a dangerously limited fashion. They stress, rightly enough, the imperative need for cooperation and association. But, one must ask, on what level? There are those whose desire for communion with others is expressed in more external, hearty and objective activities, and those whose natural disposition is to weave communal patterns of a more subtle type. They are prepared to contribute to the common good, but in a less obvious fashion than that of their fellows. Having a deeper and richer inner life, they tend to dwell somewhat apart—and be misunderstood as a result, even by those whose particular concern is 'education for community'.

It will be evident that in giving his vigorous support to such education the psychologist appears as the powerful ally of those amongst us who are making a stand for the characteristically 'feminine' values. Of course in one sense it is 'feminine' to turn inwardly upon oneself and enter a world of phantasy and contemplation. But it is 'feminine' also to enter into a relation of fellowship with



others. Why? Because we are concerned essentially in this matter with substance rather than with form. The *means* we use to 'achieve relationship' may of course belong to the form side of things—games, expeditions, organization, communal labour. But the *essence* of such association is 'feminine', entailing as it does a deepening of those mystical relationships which we enter into in terms of feeling rather than of thought. And this is where the psychologist comes in. For his realm is that deep and mysterious sphere of the subjective in which knowledge is not a matter of intellectual cognition but of psychic identification, empathy, communion. All this belongs essentially to the kingdom of Isis, and it follows as a result that he finds himself working hand in hand with those amongst us who are engaged in vindicating feminine against masculine values. In relation to community life in particular the therapists and the feminists are united in pleading for fellowship and 'relationship' as against formalism, authority and abstract thinking.

What this brings with it, however, as I have already suggested, is the danger that the creative aspect of the masculine principle will be unduly neglected. We must watch carefully to see that the claims of community are not pressed too insistently at the expense of those of self-differentiation, and that a too facile humanitarianism does not triumph at the expense of asceticism. 'As for living, our servants will do that for us,' disdainfully exclaimed Villiers de l'Isle Adam. Such fastidious sentiments are justifiably regarded with deep suspicion today, not only by psychologists, but by educated people generally. Yet it should be evident that unless such a contempt for mere biological fulfilment is affirmed anew—although in a widely different form—by our descendants culture will disappear beneath a sea of mediocrity. We are threatened, as someone observed recently, with a 'dog' civilization in which

uncritical promiscuity will prevail. Only a compensatory vindication of the feline principle of aloofness and self-containedness can save us from going to this extreme, and we must pray that those will appear amongst us who will pay it the recognition which it deserves.

For without a balancing emphasis upon the principle of individuation the cult of fellowship and 'meeting mysticism' will inevitably lead us seriously astray. At the same time it is clear that we must affirm our masculinity in a new fashion. Classicism, aristocracy, severity, Apollonianism, fastidiousness, criticism, Olympian restraint—these manifestations are, for historical reasons, deeply associated in our minds with coldness, cruelty, egoism, spiritual pride, traditionalism and Fascism. But the connection is by no means necessary. It is possible—difficult though the task may be—to do full justice to these elements in experience while yet remaining freely responsive to the romantic, feminine call of the heart. And this is the problem with which we seem very likely to be confronted when the 'century of the common man' has run its course a little further. On the one hand we shall be faced with the menace of the commonplace, of an egalitarian culture in which a mass of under-individualized men and women passively enjoy in common the benefits provided by the State—the 'sharing' of inferior experience. And on the other we shall have to solve the problem of creating critical, responsible and properly differentiated personalities who contrive to display the virtues of classicism without the aid of the powerful, but to our modern eyes indefensible, tradition from which they have hitherto been derived. In a word, we must somehow re-affirm the aristocratic principle without opening the door thereby to the patrician exclusiveness and superiority which have been so markedly associated with it in the past. We must effect a true marriage between the masculine and the feminine elements in our being.

The possibilities in this direction cannot be reviewed here. But I would suggest that the reconciliation may be brought about by the discipline of communitarian life. That is to say, men and women will achieve individuation by submission to the objective order and rhythm imposed upon them by a revolutionary type of social organization. If this ideal is ever realised we shall ultimately witness the emergence of a new aristocracy which derives its inspiration from the highest elements in a fundamentally democratic regime. Perhaps it is towards this goal that the violent and disturbing processes of history are today impelling us.

### 5. THE ANATOMY OF COMMUNITY

The ideal before us, then, is that of individuality-in-community, with an equal accent upon both of the elements involved. But this is an abstract notion which has little meaning until we translate it into more concrete terms. We must therefore review briefly the different types of association into which men and women can enter in the present state of society, considering them from the point of view of the degree to which they express the distinctive idea of community.

First we have the intimate, basic and sacred group of the family. Then we have those multiple and for the most part superficial relationships into which every normal citizen enters in a more or less automatic sense. As his life develops he is drawn by nature and circumstances into participating in associations of the most diverse types, and most of them can be combined with one another without disorder or embarrassment. Thus he is at one and the same time a car-owner, a newspaper subscriber, a collector of first editions, a member of his local football team, scientific society, debating club, etc. In the same way he takes part in various activities in which his instinct for social life finds expression.

And on a deeper level he becomes involved with such things as professional associations, business enterprises, leagues and movements for the support of this or the abatement of that.

Then we have to consider the associations into which a person enters simply by the fact of living fairly permanently in a particular locality. Thereby he becomes one of a body of people who are bound together primarily by common interests respecting such matters as local employment, communications, housing, consumption and the like. This type of community can best be described as 'civic', and it is that alone which is taken account of by experts in town and country planning. Here, as Mr. Lewis Mumford has pointed out,\* the crucial issue is whether such complexes are to be recognised merely from the point of view of providing better conditions for carrying on the uninspiring purposes of a materialistic civilization, or from that of the deeper, organic needs of human beings. The latter course would involve the sacrifice of a great many appliances and arrangements to which, through a false sense of values, we have come to attach excessive importance. But it would also make for the expression of powers and capacities in man which are at present denied and suppressed.

All these associations and affiliations both limit the individual to different degrees and offer him possibilities in the way of expressing his natural instinct for fellowship and cooperation. Between them they constitute his social environment and indicate the directions in which the vast majority find fulfilment and satisfaction. But none of them involve the element of community except in a restricted or superficial sense. Admittedly the activity of every group, however transitory its character, or trivial its aims, draws the individual out of his solitary life, even if it means no

\* *The Social Foundations of Post-war Building* (1942).

more than respecting the demands of etiquette, playing one's part properly at a luncheon party, or contributing to good team work in a factory or an office.

Such associations, however, do not bring out the deepest character of human relationships. No great sacrifices have to be made in the cause of unity. The common purpose to which all are dedicated does not either stimulate the higher aspirations or stir up the more dangerous passions. In most of them not much more is demanded than a certain amount of patience and the capacity for good-tempered give and take. Cooperation is achieved, but on a relatively easy level.

We do not become concerned with community in any serious sense until we have to do with a group of people who may really be said to have *committed* themselves to one another, who have created and accepted a situation in which all stand or fall together. It is a question, not only of sharing resources, dwelling places and interests, but of sharing one another. Individuals enter fully into community only when they reach the point of participating in a system in which the life of each member is determined by that of every other, in which satisfaction, effort, comprehension, opportunity and reward have become a collective instead of an individual manifestation. Thought in this matter proceeds from such notions as fellowship, solidarity, comradeship, deep enough in themselves, yet not really ultimate, to the apprehension of the profound and liberating truths enshrined in such conceptions as being 'of one body', or 'one in Christ'. The group is seen at this point to embody in the personalities of its members that ultimate principle by which the one and the many are reconciled.

Again, as we approach nearer this ideal we find that certain elements in the communal life become accentuated, and the more of them that are realised in conjunction the nearer we draw to the central inspiration of group activity. For what such activity makes for essentially is integration,

both in its objective and subjective sense. It first of all places people in a situation in which all the different elements in social life—living together (preferably on the land), manual work, fellowship, organization, discussion, art, self-recreation instead of parasitic dependence on amusements provided by others, common worship, mutual responsibility—are brought to a focus. And then as a natural result it draws out and coordinates all the ‘sides’ of the individual’s character. The whole environment brings into manifestation the whole man.

It is for this reason that what may appear superficially as a dangerous segregation from the wider life of society may in reality be a deeper initiation into its character. For what is usually regarded as constituting ‘normal’ existence is in reality only a terrible distortion of people’s natural relation to the world and to one another. In these matters size is nothing. In the metaphysical order microcosm and macrocosm are one. And a ‘little world’ which exhibits all, or most, of the features of true society is immeasurably preferable to a more extensive one which has fallen grievously away from the divine archetype.\*

I am not here speaking of life in any remote village which, apart from the saving influence of Nature, may be as benighted as that of any suburb, but of the isolated community which has become, humanly speaking, representative. When this condition is in a measure achieved it is ‘isolated’ only from a creation of phantasy, but not from reality. Its pattern may be eccentric regarded from the standpoint of the conventional. But it corresponds in its own fashion to that which is laid up in Heaven.

At the same time it is practically impossible to respond with any completeness to the experience of community without being committed in one way or another to a revolutionary conception of society. For one very soon becomes

\* See also, however, p. 222.

aware of possibilities in the way of creative living that simply cannot be satisfied within the framework of our existing social system. More and more is the individual driven outside it. Yet at the same time his attitude is not that of the rebel who is out to attack and destroy those who are giving it its present shape. On the contrary he is inspired to work in some quiet corner—and most of the corners at present are very quiet indeed—at laying the humble but momentous foundations for an alternative way of life.

If, now, we consider the various factors, material and spiritual, which go to the shaping of community life we are met first of all with the basic fact of co-location. Plainly, every serious group will be impelled, within the limits imposed by occupation, geography and economics, to work towards the ideal of living together, if not in the same building at least in the same place. For only in these terms can the possibilities of communal life be brought into full manifestation. But of course great things can be accomplished by bodies of people who, even though they are rarely in physical contact, are yet in true association.

Nor, it may be remarked, does the fact that they are thereby exempted from the wear and tear of community life necessarily render their burden any lighter. For there are forms of spiritual association which, although they do not entail co-residence, yet make demands on the individual which are in another sense no less severe. The principle of 'bear ye one another's burdens' can be applied, not only in the exterior, but in the interior sphere of being as well.

That is to say, it is possible for a group of people to undertake this work of mutual acceptance and accommodation largely 'in the Silence', with a minimum amount of physical contact. In the language of esotericism, their *karma* is worked out principally on the inner planes of

being, in the subjective sphere. But this is a deep aspect of the question which I can only touch upon in passing.

Again, all true community association is essentially voluntary in character. The individual seeks a common purpose with others because something deep within his being is moving him towards cooperation and self-transcendence. This automatically excludes all groups which are formed only to express in a mechanical or hypnotized mode ideas which have been imposed upon them by outside agencies. It includes the dynamic and creative Russian *kollektiv* just in so far as it develops a healthy communal life, but rejects it uncompromisingly in so far as its activities are determined by the enforced presence within it of a representative of the Party which is controlling the destiny of the country, and by the acceptance generally of a materialistic philosophy. The 'idea' which a true group realises and expresses grows directly, mysteriously and spontaneously out of its distinctive life. And yet although it is on that account unique it blends, by a mystical principle, with all other ideas which are similarly engendered. For all manifestations which are truly of the Spirit are essentially—though not necessarily at all obviously—compatible with one another.

As to the basic justification for the community, it can clearly only be that of service. Firstly, within the group itself each is dedicated to the service of the others. And secondly, all are dedicated to making some contribution to the wider life, either on the material, the intellectual or the spiritual level. This one simply takes for granted. But it is worth while emphasizing, perhaps, that the material aims of every true communal association must be subordinated to those which it sets itself on the spiritual plane. Although one cannot live without food, clothing and shelter, people who are seeking to follow the communal way will be concerned first and foremost to enter into a certain condition



of peace, sympathy and stability which will provide the dynamic for a creative life.

They will not work in order to realise the bourgeois ideal of 'security', nor to amass wealth. And even the labour which they devote to mastering material problems will not be an end in itself. Rather will it be a mode of entering into and expressing the deeper life of the spirit. The innermost key to communitarian life lies in the experience of unity-in-God.

Nor is it merely a question of preserving the proper relation between the material and the spiritual worlds. We have also to consider the somewhat more subtle principle that people are not basically unified by having a common objective, but by responding to a common interior inspiration. Individuals may become associated momentarily for the most diverse objects—extinguishing a heath fire, unloading a train, protesting against some political injustice, studying a particular aspect of culture, playing a game. But all these alliances and affiliations are potent only in proportion to the magnitude and dignity of the object which they have set before themselves. And however extensive the aims which they are thus collectively pursuing, they remain *finite*. As such they are essentially inferior to those which are aspired to by the person who has awakened to the experience of religion. For in religion—if it is not merely a matter of theological formulations and institutional observances—we touch the plane of the infinite. Our values become absolute. We become increasingly related to the Whole. We are no longer compelled to flee from one shattered ideological structure to another which is equally at the mercy of the relative, or to exchange one political creed for another no less inadequate.

Even if we change our religious allegiance we still do so within the boundaries of a philosophy on the basis of which men of all creeds can unite—the acceptance of the great fact

of God. And having touched this level of realisation we are moved to seek nothing in and for itself. Our aim, rather, is to attune ourselves to That which draws all our diverse activities to a point of focus, which lies equally within all manifestations, which subordinates to itself all possible aims, purposes and enterprises, which gives us freedom to work within all forms and to make use of all symbols without being bound by them. Above all, we value that which enables us to live in and for each other. This is infinitely more creative than being fascinated by an opposite polarity, stimulated by overcoming this or that opponent, or elated by exposing some heretical 'error'. For it initiates us progressively into the mystery of the All.

Finally, the attitude of every spiritually enlightened community is essentially pacifistic. The first concern of its members is not to attack the existing system but to demonstrate quietly and persuasively to the world that they know of a better way of solving the problem. It is no chance that a considerable proportion of those who are active in the movement were conscientious objectors in this or the previous world war.

## Chapter Nine

# THE EXPERIENCE OF COMMUNITY

### 1. THE DEMANDS OF ASSOCIATION

In the previous chapter we considered the structure of the community, and arrived at the conclusion that it involved a delicate and creative balance between the elements of individual and group expression. We must now examine briefly the effects of community life upon those men and women who have the courage and enterprise to dedicate themselves to it.

First of all, we have to recognize that the motives which inspire a person to join a community need the most careful scrutiny. In discussing pacifism earlier I suggested that the fact that an individual identifies himself with an idealistic enterprise by no means necessarily indicates that the whole of his personality is behind the gesture. And this principle applies very definitely to members of experimental groups. I am personally quite prepared to believe that a considerable proportion of them are neurotic and unstable personalities who are escaping from the demands of social life rather than seeking to lay the foundations of something better.\*

We have also to take account of a criticism advanced in the Report of the Church Assembly: *Towards a Common Life* (1948). In considering modern experimental communities the compilers observe (p. 14 n.): 'Many of them,

\* See Kenneth C. Barnes, 'The Limitations and Conditions of Community', *The New Era*, July-August, 1946.

however, have elements of anarchy, the very antithesis of community, for they base their hopes of synthesis in community less on redemption than on the eventual replacement of a hopelessly corrupt contemporary form of society.' In other words, the basis on which they are working is purely humanistic. The religious thinker must, of course, accept this judgment as being fundamentally sound. Nevertheless, due recognition must be paid to the fact that, as I have suggested earlier (p. 74), the achievements of social reformers cannot safely be measured by their *explicit* aims alone. The impulse to break away from society and start afresh may have in many cases a deep spiritual significance—a theme to which I shall return in the next chapter.

As to those who are genuinely committing themselves to this revolutionary activity, there can be no doubt that it imposes upon them a severe process of psychological re-education. Intensive association makes extreme demands upon the individual—particularly if it entails living together physically. All the reports that reach us from those pioneers who have actually dedicated themselves in one way or another to community life go to show that it arouses resistances and disturbances of the deepest order. The individual is challenged as he has never been challenged before. His whole psychological attitude has to be transformed. He finds himself obliged to think in new ways, to renounce many of his past allegiances, to enter in the other direction into relationships which perplex and disconcert his mind yet at the same time open up remarkable spiritual possibilities.

He discovers that those relations of interdependence and mutual accommodation which he experienced formerly only within the realm of the family have now been extended to include the members of a wider group. The division of labour, the distribution of investments and profits, the

status of different types of workers, the achievement of a common purpose, the attitude to authority and direction, the relation between solitude and association, the balance between indulgence and discipline—all these problems acquire an importance and urgency unknown outside the frontiers of community life. There is involved indeed a 'transvaluation of all values'. The most cherished traditions and conventions must be placed selflessly and resolutely in the crucible of collective experiment, in order that new forms of thought and action may be forged for the future at the cost of much sacrifice and distress. The process for each and all is practically equivalent to submitting to a searching psycho-analysis—with the difference that the drama is played out, not in the discreet seclusion of the consulting room, but in common with others who are submitting to the same process, and in terms of the vicissitudes of ordinary life.

Clearly this opens up remarkable possibilities. For even the most gifted psycho-therapist can make only his own personal contribution to the healing process. But here we are presented with the important principle that each can be helped, not only by the solitary specialist, but by the group of which he is a member. Not only in health, but in sickness he draws power from the collective unity. That is to say, in so far as—and only in so far as—any one of the group is giving expression to its distinctive life he will aid in the psychological re-education of the others according to their particular situation and needs.

We are here involved with a deep mystical conception. *No one individual can provide the answer to the problem.* It is revealed only to the degree that the truth is expressed through a group of harmonized minds. This principle evidently brings with it a serious threat to such things as professionalism, the fads and prejudices of the individual specialist, and the whole institution of the confessional,

whether instituted by an ecclesiastical organization or conducted by a psychologist-mage in the dim-lit secrecy of the clinic. It may, of course, open the door to other dangers. But it evidently has important latent possibilities.

As to the positive side of the picture, it is evident that those who have succeeded in overcoming their egoism and identifying themselves fully with the activity of a group enjoy a remarkable sense of fulfilment. Although this involves at the present stage a severe restriction of the horizon and the acceptance of 'frugality', what is lost in terms of material scope is more than made up by the consciousness that one is living in close touch with reality. The range of possibilities may be severely narrowed down from the standpoint of those who think of life as an affair of rapid and extended movement, large-scale operations, generous financial resources, formal social occasions and the activity of vast, characterless and highly organized institutions, but they are no less wide if they are looked at instead from that of the person who is working out his destiny along with a few others in terms of humble, but deeply satisfying labour in which all the powers of the soul are fully and conjointly brought into play.

In other words the mark of community life is that the accent has shifted from the extensive to the intensive realm. The pioneers in this field prefer to live in a 'little world' that is convincing and real than in a world which is shaped by abstract, impersonal and even inhuman forces. As a consequence they do not, if they are healthy, develop the characteristic psychology of the outcast, the exile and the displaced person. For they have segregated themselves only in order to strike down their roots in another and more promising soil. They have left one kind of society so as to enter another of a more organic type. And in spite of its restricted, precarious and embryonic character they are sustained by the fact that it provides a preliminary reconcilia-

tion of the three fundamental elements in our human experience—God, nature and man.

These people have also learned that life in community brings with it new possibilities in the way of fulfilment and release from the constraints of egoism. There emerges, in fact, the important principle that the isolated individual can solve his problems most effectively by uniting with others in the activity of a group. And this applies even to those whose basis of life is religious. For although we owe to religion a realisation of the preciousness and sanctity of the individual soul we have, as I have suggested earlier, to face the fact that it has made also—especially under the inspiration of Protestantism—for an excessive concern with ‘personal salvation’ which has exacerbated the individualistic element in experience to a dangerous degree. And it has thrust into the background the fundamental principle that active cooperation with others in social undertakings—provided that it is not resorted to as a substitute for dealing with one’s personal problems—is the most powerful discipline for the soul, and is actually the high road to that ‘salvation’ which the misguided are prone to seek within.

Not that the individual who follows this salutary path actually comes to the point at which he is conscious of having been vouchsafed ‘salvation’. It is rather that his concern as to whether or not he is ‘saved’ no longer dominates his mind, and his development thenceforward proceeds on more normal lines. We are impelled, in fact, to conclude that the only form of religion which can be safely followed is one which, however mystical its theology, lays a heavy emphasis on ‘works’ and emphasizes the principle, in conjunction with others, of purification by action. The resolute individualist may indeed do much in the direction of ‘working out his own salvation’. But it is when creative activity is undertaken together with others that the full powers of the soul are brought into manifestation.

Everyone is aware that the finest characters are produced by a way of life which compels a man to struggle at one and the same time with his private problems, with material obstacles and with the task of associating with others in a collective enterprise. One may affirm that it is this 'colonial' tradition, carried to a higher plane, which will produce the representative religious personality of the future. The keynote is concerted action to a creative end.

But the difficulties raised by any serious attempt to work out one's destiny in this fashion are so formidable that those who commit themselves to it are driven almost inevitably towards seeking some sort of spiritual foundation for their activities—even if they did not begin with it in the first place. For it soon appears that nothing substantial and enduring can be achieved in this field unless a higher degree of unity and harmony is maintained by all concerned—or at least by those on whom the weight of the undertaking principally rests. Such is this new order of life that the individual is inescapably driven down to a deeper level of consciousness. He is called upon to bear severe trials and meet with situations of a perplexing and unfamiliar type. The pattern imposed is such that his individual, egocentric existence is progressively merged in that of his associates, and this amounts to a purgation, and in many cases a crucifixion. Inevitably he finds himself seeking for some principle, idea or inspiration which will at the same time justify this type of existence and give him the strength to bear its difficult aspects. You cannot—which is what it amounts to—die to your natural unregenerate self without seeking support in some Power which will aid you in the ordeal.

The manner in which such a power is conceived and formulated is not at the moment the point. The point is that we cannot go very far along this path without being compelled to look more steadfastly within.



The degree to which any particular group consciously gives its labours a spiritual orientation depends, of course, entirely on the outlook and sympathies of those concerned. But it may be suggested that the way of life which they have adopted by associating themselves together in community is itself propitious for religious realisation.

In the first place, if they are located in the country the calming and healing influence of nature will go a long way towards correcting that sharp, bright and superficial psychology which is fostered by life in large cities. It will not, of course, by itself make them religious, but it will at least impose upon their minds deeper and more harmonious rhythms and thereby prepare them for a more profound order of realisation. And then there can be no doubt that the experience of community is so essentially spiritual that it turns the mind naturally towards religion—not in the formal sense, but in the sense that the individual gains all sorts of insights and intuitions which constitute, so to speak, a preliminary initiation into the realm of religious realisation. For the very fact of seeking to reconcile diversity in unity on the human plane quickens certain deeper processes in the soul and lifts it somewhat above the realm of illusion.

## 2. THE RELIGIOUS GROUP

As to those groups which are consciously and deliberately working on a religious basis, one can only wait and see how their activities develop. There are many deep elements involved in the problem. To begin with there is the fact that the conditions controlling membership are, in one important respect at least, different from those prevailing in a secular community. In the latter those in charge are perfectly justified in applying the straightforward rule that if you do not pick your members carefully you are asking for

trouble. All genuine religion, however, involves the principle of redemption, of mutual acceptance and forgiveness in the most extreme sense. The 'difficult' individual has to be suffered and laboured with even to the point of imposing a severe strain on the group. And the fact that any particular person is 'inspired' to join it is taken very much more seriously than it would be elsewhere. Allowance has to be made for the principle of 'guidance'. The assumption has to be accepted that the 'meaning' of his presence amongst the others may not appear for a long period, and that a deep purpose may be served by it, even though it may make for unhappiness and—that manifestation so dreaded by the planner—inefficiency. The determining factor is, in fact, not man's limited aims and conceptions, but the mysterious will of God.

Naturally, no sensible body of people will go out of their way to invite trouble in this direction! But the fact remains that they will be precluded by their principles from attempting to solve the problem on the purely rationalistic level. They will seek to conform to a deeper pattern than that which expediency or ordinary reasonableness dictate.

A special problem is raised again by those communities which are devoting themselves to the cause of religious contemplation—ashrams, retreats, Heard-Huxley groups and the like. What are the most propitious conditions for the reception by them of inspiration and illumination? One point at least must be emphasized: no important results can be expected unless due provision has been made, not only for the activity of the intellect and will, but also for the emotional responses of the heart. We shall be very undiscerning if we assume that we can be conducted to the gates of Heaven by metaphysically-minded highbrows who have renounced the ways of the flesh. The theory advanced by the exponents of occidental neo-Brahminism is that the spiritual direction of affairs should be placed in the hands

of a body of disciplined philosophers who have worked out in their own lives by patient experiment the principles controlling our relations with the Absolute. They will be experts in transcendentalism, just as others are experts in physics, economics or biology. They will provide us with the norms of which we are so sadly in need in this particular field.

Now in principle one has no objection to this conception of spiritual direction. We cannot dispense with the aid which is offered us by those who have made metaphysical knowledge their speciality. And we may freely admit also that the Churches have failed to give us the lead which they should have done in this respect. But at the same time it is essential to realise that the approach of the intellectuals to the superphysical realm is of a strictly limited type. Their characteristic weapons are dispassion, analysis, concentration and will, with the result that they incline naturally to some form of *yoga* discipline. The result, however, is that they make contact only with certain limited aspects of spiritual experience and fail as a result to furnish us with the key for which we are looking.

I cannot deal here in detail with the limitations of intellectualism in this realm. I will suggest only that the elements which are left out in their scheme are contributed essentially by people of an emotional, mystical and often extremely primitive type who are related to the Mystery no less decisively in terms of feeling, and from whom the cultivated gymnosophist tends usually to shrink. Understanding, in fact, must be completed by love. And this means that the true picture of our association with the Unseen will be built up only when schools of spiritual knowledge are formed in which the heart has full freedom to deliver its testimony together with that of the head. The notion that our sophisticated contemplatives are simply intellectualizing the fruits of their deep emotional experi-

ence is entirely fantastic. All that they are able to offer us is the masculine component of spiritual knowledge. Only when the relatively disturbing feminine component is also accessible in full measure and is synthesized with it can the true road to metaphysical realisation open before us.

Finally, we have to consider the important question of how far the religious community may be expected to prosper in the present era. In this field history provides us with a wide range of precedents. Almost every type of group and association has been experimented with, and with the most varied success. At one end of the scale we have religious orders with a long and dignified history, at the other fantastic and short-lived experiments such as are described in Ray Strachey's *Group Movements of the Past* (1934).<sup>\*</sup> Perhaps the only safe conclusion which we can accept in this field is that the broader a community's basis and the more comprehensive the elements which are built into its structure, the greater the chances of its survival in the age on which we are entering. However zealous its members may be, and whatever consolation they may derive from their beliefs, the fact remains that they will sooner or later be obliged to come to terms with any element in our religious experience—universalism, mysticism, spiritualism, esotericism, ceremonial, and so on—which they have left out of account in their scheme. For this is an epoch in which in every sphere *all* aspects of human knowledge and experience must be fairly faced, tested and assimilated. Never was the challenge to particularism and restrictive individualism so powerful and insistent. Success is with those alone who are really capable of universalizing their problems, and the realm of religion offers no exception to the rule.

<sup>\*</sup> Originally published in 1928 under the title of *Religious Fanaticism*.

### 3. THE CHALLENGE OF COMMUNITY

As to the state of the community movement in general, both in this country and abroad, it is of course very difficult to obtain any sort of adequate picture of what is taking place. But there seems to be little doubt that an increasing number of people who are disillusioned regarding the possibilities offered them by a sick society are courageously experimenting in all manner of ways with a new humanitarian way of life. Whether it is a question of collective farms, retreats, hostels, groups for mutual aid, income sharing, community schools, cooperative theatrical ventures, pacifist cells—in every case we are concerned with attempts to place social life on an altogether new basis. Naturally, since these pioneers are practically all struggling against formidable economic difficulties they have deliberately cut themselves off from most of the resources normally available to the citizen. And we have seen also that their experiments impose upon them a heavy psychological burden as well. But in spite of these obstacles the movement, in its diverse forms, is steadily growing and attracting adherents.

This also is to be observed. As a result of the change in the mental atmosphere in the course of the last few decades the movement is almost completely free from the fanaticism and phantasy which characterized earlier experiments in the same direction. A substantial number of pioneers in this field are realistic, tolerant and sensible individuals who are trying to establish a way of life which will give the idealistic a chance to develop their finer human qualities. Those of the last century, on the contrary, were almost always 'peculiar people' whose extravagant and unbalanced ideas rapidly brought them to disaster. Whereas religion in the earlier cycle made in this field for eccentricity and superstition, it is now—chiefly as expressed in a passion for

social reform—inspiring our modern revolutionaries to embrace a broad and truly humanistic philosophy on which much can be, and is being, built. Anyone who is sceptical regarding the advance which has thus been made may be invited to compare Ray Strachey's book, referred to above, with *Community in a Changing World*, published in 1942.

What is most remarkable, perhaps, is the striking uniformity between the conclusions reached by exponents of community life on the basis of their widely different experience. At whatever point they start, and whatever the field in which they are working, they are led irresistibly to the same broad conclusions. Although happily there is no systematized 'philosophy' of movement—for the healthy emphasis on spontaneity, inspiration and flexibility is repugnant to such standardization—the general principles governing life in community are already clearly defined and understood. All recognise that creativeness and faith must come before security and safety, that the watchword is 'each for all and all for each', and that service and labour are a reward in themselves. In fact I imagine that the ideals and aims of community are by now so firmly planted in the minds of the majority that they must already be seriously bored by addresses and articles on the subject, and more engrossed in the study of the ways and means necessary for their realisation.

The most important problem which is raised, however, by these new communities is that of their relation to the society in which they have emerged. The attitude of practically all of them would seem to be non-political. To begin with, the philosophy on which they are working is too comprehensive to be included within the framework of any existing system. For they are evidently socialists in so far as they seek to transcend class distinctions, have abolished the division between employers and employed, and have even in some cases advanced to the stage of communism.

They are liberals in so far as they stand for the utmost freedom for each individual, and all those principles associated with this particular school of thought. And they are conservative in the sense that they distrust ideology, abstract thinking and bureaucracy and have a deep feeling for custom and tradition, nature and the instinctive life of man.

In spite of these affinities, however, they are distinguished by the fact that they are seeking to realise their aims by non-political means. They have little or no association with political parties and instead attempt to attain directly in very simple terms those ends to which political parties are dedicated. That is to say, they are devoting themselves immediately to laying the foundations of the 'good life', attempting to live in such a way that both the production and the consumption of goods shall be achieved in a natural and organic fashion, so that the individual's faculties can be brought fully into play and the day's activities become satisfying and real. This makes in one direction for a considerable economization of power. For instead of wasting energy in attacking and protesting against the activities of the bureaucrats, the militarists, the 'bloody capitalists' and all the other types which are depressing the level of our civilization, these people devote their energies instead to the task of quietly exploring, in a remarkably non-contentious spirit, the possibilities of an alternative order of society. Their way is the way of peace, and they reap a rich reward as a result.

It is a question, of course, as to how far community life in its present form can be really educative and satisfying. Here one must distinguish between the form and the scale of communitarian activities. As to the first, we must hold fast to the principle that every microcosm is the Macrocosm in miniature. Even a small group living in extreme isolation is sooner or later presented with all the typical problems which confront a wider society. And it exhibits in its

structure, even if it is on the smallest scale, all the basic elements which are involved in human association. Life in a community of this type should normally prepare a man for dealing with the tasks imposed by existence beyond its frontiers. For it gives him a grip upon those universal principles which control all experience.

Yet the factor of scale cannot be left entirely out of account. In the first place, such pioneers are denied the stimulation and inspiration which comes from participation in a widely conceived scheme which is designed to realise comprehensive aims, which mobilizes every type of talent, and opens spacious perspectives before the mind. It is obvious, for instance, that any imaginative person who is giving his energies to such a project as TVA will expand and develop in a sense which is impossible within the confines of a group devoted to reviving arts and crafts in an obscure village. The element of the organic is involved in each case, and the principle remains that 'there is no size in reality'.

Nevertheless, the experience of coordination is one thing, and the experience of achieving such coordination in vast and impressive dimensions another. The microcosm may reflect the Macrocosm, but it tends by its very nature to be infected with parochialism, and to develop an overcharged and unventilated atmosphere. The drama may be intense, but it is played out on an unduly restricted stage. And although the protagonists may be as representative of the basic types in the human family as those in a mystery play it remains true that the elements in the situation which are provided by sheer numbers, quantities and distances do not come into the story, and that a certain impoverishment results. This is, of course, inevitable in all pioneer work. But it should be properly taken into account.

Finally, we have to consider the interesting question of the future relation of these pioneer communities to society



as a whole. We are involved in this matter, I suggest, with a principle to which I have referred earlier in these pages—that of levels of reform.\* Everything depends upon how radical a type of change the individual wishes to initiate. There is obviously plenty of scope available today for those who wish to improve the social structure on more orthodox democratic lines, who seek, that is to say, to introduce progressive reforms within the limits of the existing system.

The enormous possibilities which are open to us in this direction are indicated decisively by the history of TVA. The Tennessee Valley Authority is a federal project. Although it is carrying out its programme on a regional basis, it is involved with the politics of seven states as well as with that of the USA as a whole. And most important of all, it does not displace the capitalistic system, but seeks only to establish certain general conditions in respect of such things as navigation, flood control, the provision of electrical power, afforestation, scientific farming, which are propitious to the development in the area of business enterprises. Its highest ideal is to bring into existence by persuasion rather than compulsion a state of affairs in which profit-seeking concerns will cooperate voluntarily with its purposes, so that the region will be spared the miseries which result from unrestrained exploitation.

From the point of view of an uncompromising radical reformer the basis on which the Authority is working will, of course, appear to be insufficiently progressive. The relation between capital and labour remains unsolved; only a small amount of the fruits of commercial enterprise find their way into the pockets of the workers; the limitations of the democratic system of representation remain; and the purely material ideal of producing more and more wealth still provides the chief inspiration for those who are developing the resources of the Valley.

\* See Chapter One, p. 13.

Yet there can be no doubt that within these limits tremendous advances are being made, men's horizons are being widened in an unprecedented fashion, and new forms of organization are being developed which provide remarkable opportunities for human development. Nowhere else in the world outside Soviet Russia had men been presented before with a demonstration on such a scale of what can be achieved by planning on an organic basis, so that all the diverse elements represented by the processes of nature and the activities of man were integrated and coordinated to a high degree. The enthusiasm and energy which have been released by this method of attacking the problem reveal unmistakably the inspiration to be derived from an emphasis on unity instead of separation and contention.

But it is no less clear that those who are seeking to express still more advanced realisations are also making a very important contribution to the problem. Since they are undertaking experiments which entail renunciations which few at present are prepared to make, the scale of their operations is naturally extremely small. Nevertheless, they are rendering society a tremendous service by creating the prototype of social forms and institutions which will be adopted by the majority centuries ahead. The path which they are following calls for serious sacrifices, exposure to a considerable degree of risk, and submission to a great measure of isolation. But their reward consists in the fact that they are striking an authentic spiritual note and revealing to the world the more pure and undistorted modes of social activity. It is only extremists and radicals who bring out the deeper issues which are contained in any human situation.

There is an essential affinity between the person who is contributing to the grand integration of the forces in the Tennessee Valley and the person who is maintaining the rhythms of a community of half a dozen pioneer reforms

in a remote settlement in the Cotswolds. Both in their different ways are exploring the possibilities of democracy and working substantially for the same great aim. And they present a common front against the forces of reaction.

#### 4. THE ELECT AND THE ELECTORATE

And now a final consideration. How far can these new communities be considered as anticipations of a new form of society? They have been described, as we have seen, as 'cells' and 'oases', and compared to patches of healthy tissue in the fabric of the body social, while Aldous Huxley has characterized them as 'small-scale working models of the better form of society to which the speculative idealist looks forward'. Assuming that the way of life which they represent gradually becomes paramount, how will this transition take place?

It will be evident that even when they are located in the very midst of a large centre of population they are essentially distinct from it. Although they cannot escape the obligation of being entangled in the existing economic system they remain in the spiritual sense entirely apart from it. For they consist of pioneers whose ideal it is to introduce into the world a widely different philosophy of living which would make in the end for the disappearance of civilization as we know it today. Such people maintain the closest human relations with those amongst whom they are working, but solely for the purpose of winning their allegiance to a new conception of society. If they live among the poor and share their bad food and housing it is only to lay the foundations for a higher type of life.

One thing at least is plain. The higher possibilities of human association can only be fully disclosed when contact with our present society has been reduced to a minimum. For only in seclusion from the world are men and women

given an opportunity, not simply to practise a measure of spiritual contemplation, but also to try out in terms of social organization those new ideas which have begun to stir their imagination. What are demanded in the midst of the desert of our discordant civilization are laboratories in which new and fruitful experiments can be carried out under test conditions. As a modern pioneer has written, 'At such times (as these) it may become the vocation of a few to separate themselves, at least partially, from the existing pattern of society in order to preserve the best of their heritage and to build under the inspiration of a new vision.'\*

The view is fully justified. For life in the ordinary world means everlasting frustration and compromise, contact with people whose thoughts and feelings, in spite of their best efforts, are being unremittingly debased and perverted by the conditions of modern existence. The only hope is to make a fresh start in relative isolation and discover the rhythms and processes which have been all but obliterated by the fantastic environment which we have created for ourselves by ignoring our finer intuitions and responses. The heart must be given a chance to correct the fatal aberrations of the head.

What follows? Assuming that such colonies achieve at least sufficient success to bring forth a certain number of individuals who have attained to a clearer vision of spiritual realities, how should they proceed? The conclusion is drawn by some thinkers that their function will be that of returning to the wider society they have left in order to rejuvenate its customs and institutions. They will give the world the benefit of what they have discovered in seclusion. The new centres will provide enlightened experts who will play their part in perfecting the structure of society.

\* Harold Pratt in *The New Era*, May 1946.

But will it really work out like that? To begin with we have to reckon with the deep-seated resistance of all conventional thinkers to any ideas which challenge their convictions. Is, for instance, an orthodox economist whose training has involved a dangerous over-development of the mental faculties at the expense of those of the 'soul' going to accept the suggestions of a thinker who, as a result of submitting himself to a widely different type of experience, has attained to a sense of the organic and become aware, as a result, of a whole new system of relationships? And what in any case of the formidable challenge which is presented to class prejudices and bourgeois values?

Due account must also be taken of the state of mind of the pioneers themselves. For it is obvious that the more clear and satisfying the vision of social life which is accorded to them, and the more radical the conceptions at which they arrive, the more extreme will be their sense of the contrast between their own communal life and the corrupt world by which they are surrounded. And the more hopeless will be the prospect of clearing that world up. They will most likely therefore be driven to the conclusion that the only path forwards will lie, not in sending the products of these 'cells' back into society, but in multiplying such centres until they ultimately cohere to form an alternative and superior system of social organization. In other words they will realise the futility of attempting to pour new wine into old bottles.

Of course it is at present quite impossible to see *how* such a new order could arise in the midst of the old. But precedents are in this matter of little significance. We are living in an age which can only be described as apocalyptic. Anything may happen. And what does happen will certainly disconcert the scientists and the men of reason who draw their conclusions primarily from a review of the past. It is true that up to the present practically all commu-

nist colonies have failed, even including those which had a religious basis. But to assume that they will necessarily do so in the future is to challenge the activity of the Creative Spirit. One can only strive and suffer and see what is yet to be woven on the loom of time.

It would be unwise to dismiss the often bizarre and amateurish experiments which are being made in this direction simply because they appear at the present time to be almost negligible in relation to the vast system in the midst of which they are so painfully emerging. They may well represent the germs of a whole new civilization. Moreover, the development is one which has been definitely prophesied. But this belongs to the next and final chapter, in which we shall have to consider the relation of the Unseen to our social aspirations and experiments here on earth.

## *Chapter Ten*

### HEAVEN AND EARTH

EARLIER in this book I have advanced the view that mankind may have to face the fact that the world is so designed that we can control its forces only in the light of the deepest order of religious experience. Although we may be able to alleviate the situation here and there for certain brief periods by resourceful shifts and compromises we shall not deal with it fundamentally until we accept without reservation what I have described as the Terms of the Contract. In this final chapter I want to consider briefly what this implies.

#### 1. THE CHALLENGE OF THE UNSEEN

The view is accepted by orthodox religious thinkers that we cannot live on 'secular' Humanism alone—that is to say, by a Humanism which is not consciously and devoutly God-oriented. But these same people are themselves reluctant to face the obligations imposed upon them by a full acceptance of a religious philosophy of life. Their religion may be earnest and sincere, but it does not make for that living relation with the great Unseen which alone will provide the power which we require in order to dominate the chaos in which we are at present living. Piety and conventional observances are not enough. Even an enhancement of human love is not enough. It is demanded of us also that we should bring to bear upon our problems a

knowledge of the great invisible Ambient by which we are surrounded.

Professor James Ward once observed that the world was not designed to make science easy. One may add that it was not designed to make religion easy either. The foundation of all religious life is certainly attunement to the Spirit; on this we all agree. But we must allow also for the fact that such attunement as it becomes more complete will make for a deepening knowledge of the more interior aspects of that great cosmos in which we live. To win the tremendous fight against the discordant influences in nature and man which are now dominant we must *know*. We must acquire, not only relatively superficial scientific knowledge, but transcendental knowledge as well. We must venture into those strange and often dangerous realms of which the conventional are afraid and the scientifically-minded sceptical. All life and power come to us from the Within, and only when we have properly related ourselves to it shall we control the forces which mould society. One does not expect the humanists amongst us to accept this view, but it is a serious matter when people who profess to be religious decline to face the full implications of the way of life to which they are committed.

In the course of this essay I have at different points made passing references to this more esoteric and greatly misunderstood aspect of religion, and I will venture to recall them here. In discussing the communist technique of 'liquidation' I suggested that the revolutionaries who pursued it would have one day to reckon with the revengeful activity of those whom they had violently displaced into the invisible planes of being. Are such speculations merely fanciful? I submit that knowledge of these matters is accessible to anyone who submits to the appropriate disciplines and that it is for the religious amongst us before



anyone else to acquire it and bring it to bear upon the discussion of sociological problems.

Again, on another page I referred to the fact that man is not in the present cycle to be healed only by restoring his organic relation to Nature. Although such reconciliation is of enormous importance, it is no less true also that we are today, whether we suspect the fact or not, becoming polarized by refined forces at work in the Unseen which can be controlled by mental means. And our health and energy will increasingly depend upon how far we are able to take advantage of them. However disconcerting this fact may be for the traditionalist, it is one which must be faced.

## 2. IDEALS AND ARCHETYPES

Further, there is an aspect of the Unseen which bears very directly upon the problem of creating a new social order. We have to enquire whether we can ever do more in this direction than assist in the projection on to the physical plane of forms and structures which have been already built up by greater minds working in more interior realms of being. To ask this question is to bring into relief a fundamental difference between the profane and the religious approach to the creation of a new society. For the purely humanistic thinker an ideal is nothing more than a regulative concept, an imaginary quantity, a projection from the actually existent, which aids us in shaping the future. Before his eyes is the shining but insubstantial image of *what might be*, which he regards as nothing more than a happy creation of the imagination. All this, as can be seen, derives from a materialistic philosophy for which physical objects alone are fully real.

For the spiritual scientist, on the contrary, the Ideal becomes the Archetype. And this is significantly conveyed

by the use of the expression, *The Kingdom of Heaven on Earth*. In other words, he seeks to assist in precipitating into the realm of space-time that which in another dimension already *is*. Whether he thinks of the celestial elements involved in terms of Platonic Ideas, of the life of hierarchies of angels, or of actual places located on other planes of being, is not here the point. The point is that in thus manifesting faith in an already existing but invisible Reality he is dealing with the problem on a far deeper level. If—and it is out of the question to discuss his metaphysics at this point—he has attained to a true vision in this matter it is obvious that he is on a far firmer basis than the idealist who is merely relating himself only to the *possible*.

For power comes essentially from an interior relation to the Real. Those who have achieved a living association with the invisible Kingdom and inwardly know it to be a reality will clearly be preeminently endowed for the task of bringing it down to earth. The key to all expression is conscious or unconscious identification with the Archetype. And the more conscious such identification is, the more potent will be the result. It is not merely a question of believing vaguely in the existence of a Celestial City, but of getting actively in touch with the Builders who control these forces in the other realms of being.

With this the door is opened upon a whole field of thought the nature of which can only be briefly indicated here. The essence of the matter is that really *constructive* thinking in the realm of sociology will never be achieved by mere intellectual effort alone. What is called for is a vision of certain basic forms and rhythms of a spiritual type which are discoverable on all planes of being. Human affairs will never prosper until they are planned in accordance with structures and processes which correspond to the grand cosmic scheme of life. This, it must be insisted, is *not* a vague conception, but an Order which discloses

itself to those who are prepared to devote themselves patiently to the study of spiritual science. Again, it is important to bear in mind that the Kingdom is an institution which is distinguished not merely by satisfactory material arrangements relating to housing, labour, transport and the like, but by the fact that every aspect of existence is penetrated by love and light. It implies very much more than secular progress, and cannot in the nature of the case be established by science alone. Further, it is more than likely that the people who will ultimately bring it into existence will be high-grade spiritualists who have developed the capacity to make contact with those planes of being of which the earthly Kingdom is, as it were, the precipitation. For, as I have already suggested, potency comes essentially from alignment with the Heavenly Pattern.

Nor in this matter can we afford to neglect the factor of prophecy. With those who assume that the channels of divine inspiration were closed down finally some two thousand years ago I will not pause to dispute. The more enlightened student of these questions will accept the fact that revelation is continuous and that it is manifested particularly at major turning-points in the history of the world. We have indubitably reached such a turning-point now, and there is abundant evidence of the fact that through all manner of channels new direction and guidance is being vouchsafed to us to enable us to deal with the tremendous problems which it raises.

It is out of the question to examine these disclosures here, but I cannot forbear alluding to the fact that in a remarkable revelation entitled *Oahspe*, first published in America in 1882, the general character of the age on which we are entering was foretold in impressive terms. To begin with, it prophesies that a decisive cleavage will take place between those who are clinging to old assumptions and

traditions and those who are responding to the new inspiration :

When I separate the people, the good go away out from amongst the evil.

This for the basic reason that :

No man can practise the highest, whilst living with those who are inclined downward.

And again :

If an exalted man marry a woman beneath him, he can lift her up.

But if an exalted woman marry a man beneath her, he will pull her down.

Even so is it with the righteous man, that weddeth to the world and liveth therein : soon or late it will pull him down.

But if the righteous man go with his fellows into a separate place, and wed himself to Jehovih\* and His ways, then shall that righteous man be lifted up. And, moreover, he shall be a power to lift up the world.

Shall a bride not live with her husband? And they that choose the Creator live with Him?

It thus comes about that organic groups represent the third phase of our modern social evolution :

First on earth, monarchies, then republics, then fraternities, the latter of which is now in embryo, and shall follow after both the others.

As to the new colonies, they will consist of those who have renounced the world and dedicated themselves to the Great Spirit. As a result of their radicalism they are destined to prosper :

This also will I accomplish : Kingdoms and nations shall judge their own strength by their rigid laws and standing armies.

And they shall look upon My people, and say : Alas, they are weak ; they have neither kings, nor armies, nor rigid laws !

\* The term used in this revelation for the Great Spirit.

But My prophets shall remember My chosen of old, who had faith in Me. And My prophets shall say to the kings with mighty armies: Behold, ye are the weakest; and those that have no armies are the strongest. And their prophecies shall not fail.

It is further affirmed that the society from which these pioneers have withdrawn will progressively decline:

Neither take ye any part in the government, whether it doth this or that.

For many men shall rise up, saying: If the government would make a law of peace; or, if the government would prohibit the traffic and manufacture of this curse or that curse . . .

But we say unto you, all these things shall fail. Trust ye not in the ungodly to do a godlike matter.

The societies shall fail; the Peace Society shall become a farce; the Prohibitory Society shall be lost sight of. . . .

For they are fallen under the lower light; none can turn them about the other way . . .

But ye shall come out from amongst them, and be as a separate people in the world.

These statements must of course be taken in conjunction with the other teachings of the book, which are ethically on a very high plane. I call attention to them here, firstly because they suggest that the pioneers who are at present founding colonies outside the existing system may be following a deeper inspiration than they suspect, and secondly because the whole character of the revelation supports the view which I have advanced in these pages that our social problems cannot be solved unless we are prepared to take the severe path laid down for us by religion.

We need not consider here the thousand and one ways in which religious discipline and inspiration could increase our control over the material situations with which we are wrestling. The possibilities are indeed immense, and can be explored with any completeness only by those who have

established a living relation with the Unseen. But much would be achieved if more people who are working in the sociological field could be awakened to even an elementary realisation of the potency of the Spirit as an agency for harmonizing discordant and disruptive forces. Its invocation, if made with proper faith, cannot but make for an influx of light, love and power, which inevitably transforms the whole character of the situation and elevates it to a higher plane. This is especially manifest in respect to the *basic* factor in all attempts at cooperation—the securing of unity. For it is this which is supremely and preeminently of the Light. While observation and intelligence are capable of distinguishing and assembling all the elements which call for reconciliation, it is only through a specifically spiritual activity that they can be truly coordinated. For such coordination implies always in human affairs the harmonizing of the living personalities through which all the diverse aspects of the problems are refracted.

And to this principle the mystical thinker is peculiarly sensitive. If, for instance, we consider the attitude of a group of people in conference we find that for the majority the points which they are discussing are the most real element in the problem, and agreement regarding them something which they hope may emerge, given a certain amount of good will. For the true mystic, on the contrary, the unity is the basic reality which embraces all the stand-points represented by those present, and he concentrates upon it directly with firm and inspired faith. He begins with that which for the others is only the possible outcome of their deliberations. For he knows that if only all could attune themselves to a Central Principle unity would result. The key to all creative activity, in his view, is the conscious dedication of every enterprise to the Supreme Source of all harmony, rhythm and order.

For the great majority of modern men and women this

approach to the problem is impossible. Largely through the influence of scientific theories and interpretations they have lost faith in God, and their associations with traditional religion are so unhappy that it is natural that they regard all attempts to transcendentalize the situation with considerable suspicion. But one may suggest that after a long and weary experience of the secular approach to the problem they may ultimately come to realise that only by relating the objective situations with which they are presented to a more interior sphere of life will they be able to obtain mastery over them. In spite of the momentary triumph of extraversion Metaphysics may yet come into its own.

I would add that in seeking to relate ourselves to the Within we are involved with operations which are as definite as any known to physical science. Mysticism appears as—the favourite word—‘nebulous’ only to those who are unfamiliar with the anatomy of spiritual knowledge. We have in this field to do with influences, states, powers and conditions which can be identified, studied and experimented with as certainly as can any others which experience affords us. The Unseen has its rhythms, configurations and processes just as has the realm of the visible. One must affirm boldly that there is a real meaning to be attached to such a term as ‘spiritual science’. But here one is confronted again, and even more powerfully, with the prejudices of those who have received their education in a scientific age.

### 3. THE COMING RELIGION

To those, however, who realise its limitations one may suggest that religion can offer tremendous possibilities for the future both with respect to our individual lives and the wider problems of society. But it must be a religion which

does full justice to the findings of our modern consciousness. And it is precisely this fact which provides the key to our modern crisis. For what we find at present is that, as I have suggested at the very beginning of this book, the thinkers who have the deepest understanding of the need to heal our stricken civilization by a return to God are just those who are most obstinate in clinging to traditional forms of belief which bring them into conflict with emancipated modern minds.

Since I have already dealt with this problem at some length in an earlier volume, *The Nameless Faith*, I will say nothing further regarding it here. It will be sufficient, in concluding the present essay, to record my conviction that we are to-day on the threshold of a religious renaissance which will offer a despairing world a true foundation for building the New Man and the New Order.

THE END



## APPENDIX

### PRACTICAL APPLICATION

ALTHOUGH my concern in this book is not with actual social reforms, but with the general principles which should guide us in undertaking them, I feel it appropriate to provide in an Appendix some indication of the practical measures to which, in my own view, they should commit us:

1. We in the West take it for granted that violence is self-defeating. We are committed to the Democratic Way.

2. We realise that without liberty life has no meaning, and this impels us to a firm resistance against any abuse of power by that monster, the State. Not only must there be a high measure of freedom and initiative in such realms as those of education, medicine, the press and religion (which implies the disestablishment of the Church), but it must be recognised that when it is creative life is untidy, disturbing and unpredictable in its manifestations, and that it evolves and adapts its forms as it goes along.\*

As to personal liberty, we must face the fact that political rights mean little if those who enjoy them are economically enslaved. Further, we cannot longer tolerate the organization of work on the ignoble basis of the sale of a man's labour to his employer. The fundamental aim must be the fulfilment of the individual in creative work which is rewarding in itself apart from the subsistence which it provides.

\* 'The world is not like a well-run dry-goods store; it is more like a volcano. But it is a volcano over which we have some control.' Herbert Agar, *A Time for Greatness*, 1944, p. 104.

3. We are impelled inescapably to the de-centralizing of authority and initiative, to Distributism and to 'grass-root democracy'. As far as possible everything should be developed 'on the site of the work itself', on the spot, by the people who alone know what the particular problem entails. While localization releases a tremendous amount of energy and faith,\* remote control by a centralized bureaucracy or by impersonal business trusts kills these tendencies dead. Also localization means that the planners are directly involved with the outcome of their schemes.†

4. In this matter the Voluntary Principle assumes great importance. For not only does it provide a guarantee that activity has its source in living interest and spontaneity, but those concerned become directly responsible for the policy they pursue.

5. At the same time due importance must be attached to the fact that only saints will work for purely ideal ends. Emphasis on the Voluntary Principle, regionalism and decentralization implies a recognition of this fact. Small farms make for a direct interest by the family in its labours. The same with the self-directing shop in industry. It is realism, and not cynicism, to suggest to people that they can contribute to greater ends in the course of satisfying their own.

6. To achieve these purposes we shall have to clarify our understanding of the relation between the spiritual, political and economic elements in society; at present they are seriously confused. In particular we must recognise that the economic realm is essentially subordinate to the other two.

\* As indicated by the results of the Priestman-Atkinson collective bonus system, and the collective contract system evolved by Hyacinthe Dubreuil. See Charles Waterman, *The Three Spheres of Society*, p. 54 *seq.*

† 'The most spectacular plans have been drawn by men who did not have the responsibility for carrying them out.' David E. Lilienthal, TVA ("Penguin", 1944), p. 182.

7. We shall not begin to think realistically until we do so in terms of conceptions which transcend the traditional distinctions between, conservatives, liberals, and socialists. Creative reforms embody and synthesize features from all these three schools of thought.

8. The representation of the people will have to assume a more exact form, along both geographical and functional lines. And in any case the higher the degree of decentralization the less significance will such representation possess.

9. The new order must be so planned that a proper balance is established between nature's resources and man's inventions. This means not only a harmonious relation between town and country life and the end of that modern horror, the big city, but the widespread development of regionalism, as exemplified by the classic experiment at present being made in the Tennessee Valley.

10. The organic principle must be introduced into social organization. Thus it is essential that a concerted policy should be arrived at by producers, workers and consumers in common for the good of all, the State making its contribution in the form of the provision of expert advice.

11. On the economic plane everything possible should be done to restrict possessive and acquisitive tendencies amongst the owner class, or—what comes practically to the same thing—to limit the power of money. This means such things as rendering the ownership of property conditional, diminishing wasteful competition, increasing the function of salaried managers, making cheap or interest-free capital widely available, restricting the influence of shareholders on the conduct of business, limiting the interest-bearing period of investments, joint-rating and increasing the sharing of profits between employers and employed, to the point finally of abolishing the distinction between the two classes.

In this matter the principle should be constantly acknowledged that in the economic, as in every other, realm the

key to creativeness is faith. A policy which expresses in the face of fears and misgivings regarding economic consequences, the determination to create wealth and employment tends actually to prove effective.\*

12. Finally, it should be plain that all the reforms considered above contribute in their several ways to the creation of a new type of society, the password to which is Community. From which it follows that the various groups in this country and abroad which are concerned, not with the slow transformation of our existing regime, but with creating experimental model communities, are pioneers in the most complete sense of the term, and are worthy of our deepest respect.

\* 'The argument was made that by developing electricity from the water of the river TVA would rob the coal industry of its existing market for coal for steam-generated electricity. Actually, of course, sound development of one asset, water power, and a rate policy that increased its use enormously, inevitably stimulated the use of other resources, coal included.' David E. Lilienthal, *TVA*, p. 190. Of interest also in this connection are the various attempts which have been made to raise money in an emergency by the issue of local currency. See the pamphlet, *Where is the Money to Come From?* by Jeffrey Mark (1918).

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